The TRAIL of BLACK HAWK

PAUL G. TOMLINSON

C Horton

Friend of Augusta Januchewski Winczewski
the sister of Anna Januszewski
Kednie
The mother of Marcella Kednie Moore
daughter Barbara Lee Moore Blair
son John William Blair

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THE TRAIL OF BLACK HAWK

"'The kind of a horse I've always wanted to own' . . .
he thought."

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GREAT INDIAN CHIEFS SERIES

THE TRAIL OF BLACK HAWK

BY

PAUL G. TOMLINSON

Author of "To the Land of the Caribou," "In Camp on Bass Island," etc.

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PREFACE

The adventures and experiences of the hardy settlers on the continually advancing frontier have provided a fascinating but comparatively unknown chapter in the history of our country. Romance, bitter prejudice, distorted tales, and traditions more or less trustworthy, have combined to create a strong interest in the Indians. So much, however, has been written of a sensational and improbable nature that the result has not always been desirable. Just as there were "good" Indians and "bad" Indians, so the stories of Indians have ofttimes created impressions that were erroneous or even false.

The appeal of Indian life and of Indian wars, however, is perpetually strong. Who these early inhabitants of America were, what they did, how they lived and how they fought their battles, why they were engaged in conflicts with the early settlers and our troops, are essential parts of our history. The names of King Philip, Massasoit, Brandt, Tecumseh, Pontiac, Red Jacket, Black Hawk, Keokuk, Ouray, Sitting Bull and others are perhaps well known, but just what is behind the names is not so commonly understood.

And yet all this is a legitimate part of our history, which every American, and particularly every young American ought to know and wants to know. Even if it is impossible for him properly to understand the vanishing race he ought not to be ignorant of, nor forget, the struggle of those early days.

Black Hawk's War occurred in 1832. Against the encroachments of the whites and their undeniable injustice, the Indians opposed their own methods of making war. The extermination of families, the lack of mercy, even the blood-thirstiness of the redmen were among their customary methods of making war and were universally recognized as such by their enemies of their own color. Black Hawk assuredly was a patriot, courageously fighting the battles of his own people. This story is an attempt to follow facts and events of that struggle as they occurred.

The author has followed the suggestions of many librarians and teachers and has cast his narrative into the form of a story. In the main part the story is true and the aim of its writer has been to present a picture of the struggle of the settlers with the Indians, the work of our army and the daring of Black Hawk and his braves. The justice or injustice of the conflict will be understood by those who may follow the fortunes of the courageous chieftain. At all events the young readers ought to appreciate more fully the value and the cost of the land, the privileges and the homes they now possess.

The character of Black Hawk is unique. He was a natural leader, overcoming opposition in the tribes he led, as well as bravely facing his foes.

PREFACE

The events incorporated in this tale are based upon facts. The license of a storyteller has been freely used, but the basis of the book is true. The final defeat of Black Hawk, his visit at the capital of the nation and in some of the largest cites, the impression upon the old warrior in his receptions by the whites of the East, all are elements in his life which must be known in order to appreciate correctly the character of this famous Indian chief.

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PREFACE

If his young readers shall be sufficiently interested in this story of Black Hawk to follow the struggles by which America was won as they are recorded in our historical works, the writer will feel that his purpose in part at least has been accomplished.

PAUL G. TOMLINSON.

Elizabeth, New Jersey.

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THE TRAIL OF BLACK HAWK

CHAPTER I

BLACK HAWK TAKES THE TRAIL

"BLACK HAWK is on the trail again."

Joseph Hall was the speaker. With his parents, two sisters and a brother he lived on the American frontier in Illinois. In these days a reference to that part of the country as "the frontier" would cause a smile to appear on the faces of those who might hear such a statement, but in the year 1832, when the scene of this story is laid, Illinois was very far west. On Indian Creek, near its junction with Fox River, in a little clearing in the forest, the Hall family dwelt and made a hard living from the soil and from the game they might secure with the rifle.

Ten years before this time they had forced their way westward from eastern Pennsylvania and had hewn a home for themselves out of

the wilderness. At that time Joseph and his younger brother Robert were only nine and seven years old, respectively. Brought up in the woods and on the prairies they had learned the wisdom of the forest, the secrets of the trees, the flowers and the streams; they knew the habits of the wild animals and the favorite pools of the fish. Thorough woodsmen they were both of them, sound in mind and strong in body. Fatigue was almost unknown to these boys, and to endure hardships was a part of their everyday life.

It was now spring. The sun was warm and the trees were bursting with new life as the days grew longer and summer approached. The time had come when the crops must be planted and it was in this occupation that the two boys were engaged when Joseph made his remark concerning Black Hawk. A space several acres in extent, had been cleared in the heart of the forest and here it was that the Hall family eked out a scanty existence.

At one end of the clearing stood their home. A rough log cabin was all it was, but it was home and consequently was very dear to the Halls. In the rear the clearing ran down to

the edge of the woods and as much as possible of this land was under cultivation. Year by year the clearing had been enlarged until now it occupied a considerable extent. Joseph and Robert were busy at the opposite end from the place where their home stood.

"Black Hawk on the trail again!" exclaimed Robert in response to his brother's remark.

"Exactly."

"Who told you?"

"Deerfoot. I saw him early this morning down by the river."

Deerfoot was a Pottowattomie Indian, friendly to the white settlers and to the Halls in particular. He had taught Joseph and Robert much of what they knew of woodcraft and that he was a skillful teacher was attested by the prowess the two boys had acquired.

"Is it serious?" demanded Robert anxiously. He had been removing weeds from the newly sprouted cornfield and he leaned on his hoe as he waited for his brother's reply.

"Deerfoot says it is," replied Joseph. "He says that Black Hawk is very angry and means business this time."

"But what's it all about?" Robert insisted.

"The same old trouble. Black Hawk doesn't want to leave this side of the Mississippi and doesn't intend to either, if he can help it."

"He signed a treaty nearly thirty years ago saying he would go, didn't he?"

"I know it," said Joseph. "According to Deerfoot, though, Black Hawk thinks he was deceived at that time and that the treaty doesn't bind him. I think that if he had been made to leave at the time he signed that treaty down at St. Louis, everything would have been all right. They told him, however, that he could stay on until this country was thrown open for settlement and now that they want him to go he refuses. At least that's what father thinks."

"Is he going to fight?" exclaimed Robert.

"Deerfoot says so. He told me we'd better get to some safe place, too."

"Did you tell father that?"

"I did, but he laughed at me. You know how he is; he said he wasn't afraid of all the Indians in North America."

"That's foolish, I think."

"So do I," agreed Joseph. "Black Hawk and his warriors may be right around here now as far as we know. They'll start by making war

on the settlers, too; you know they always do that. They blame the settlers for taking their land away from them."

"How about Keokuk?" demanded Robert. "He is the head of the Sac tribe, while Black Hawk is only a smaller chief. What is Keokuk going to do?"

"He is already across the Mississippi, I understand. He evidently was willing to go, or at least he thought that would be the wisest thing to do. He is not a fighter like Black Hawk."

"I should say not," exclaimed Robert. "Old Black Hawk has been fighting nearly all his life, I guess."

"Ever since he was fifteen years old, so Deerfoot told me this morning. He is about sixty-five now, so you see he has been on the warpath off and on for fifty years. He must be a great old warrior if all Deerfoot told me is true."

"What did he tell you?"

"Well," continued Joseph, "he said that when Black Hawk was only fifteen he started fighting and that before he was seventeen he led a war party against an Osage camp and brought back several scalps. When he was nineteen he

led another fight against the Osages and killed six people with his own hands. A few years later in another battle he killed nine men single-handed. In the war of 1812 he sided with the British and was a terror along the border settlements. He's a real old warrior, from all accounts."

"He must be," exclaimed Robert. "He doesn't think for a minute that he can whip the United States, though, does he? How many warriors has he, anyway?"

"About five hundred or more, according to Deerfoot. He expects, however, that the Winnebagos, Pottowattomies, and Kickapoos will go in with him, and if they do they can make it pretty hot for a while around here."

"Deerfoot won't fight, will he?"

"No, indeed," said Joseph. "At least he said he wouldn't fight with Black Hawk. He doesn't think that those other three tribes will join him, either. He thinks Black Hawk will find only his own men with him when the time comes."

"When is the time coming?"

"It has already come. Black Hawk is on the trail with a party now, and is going to make

war on the settlers. He expects it will take the Whites some time to organize and by that time he himself will have large reinforcements from the other tribes."

"Well," said Robert, "if he intends to make war on the settlers what is there to prevent him from picking out the Hall family to start with?"

"Nothing in the world. That's just what I said to father, but he told me to pay no attention to such nonsense. I thought we ought to have guns out in the field here, but he said not. Just the same, I sneaked both yours and mine out of the house and hid them in that bush over there. Maybe father isn't worried, but I am."

"Well, I'm worried, too," agreed Robert. "I don't think I'm a coward by any means, but it seems to me it is a silly thing to do to stay right on here as if there was no danger at all, when at any moment we may be attacked by a band of hostile Indians."

"Still," said Joseph, "we have no special reason for thinking that we are to be the first ones attacked. Perhaps if some other family is murdered, father may realize that it is serious and move on to some safe place for a while."

"Yes, and he may wait too long."

"You can't tell father there is any danger, though."

"I know it," agreed Robert. "He holds all Indians in contempt and thinks they're all bad. Why, he hardly treats even Deerfoot like a human being."

"Deerfoot knows it, too. I don't think he likes father, and if it wasn't for the rest of us he wouldn't be half so friendly."

"He likes us all right, and he's been awfully good to you and me."

"He certainly has," exclaimed Joseph eagerly. "Personally, I think he'd warn us if he knew that Black Hawk and his band were coming this way."

"But he might not know it."

"I know," protested Robert, "but you must remember that in this case it is Indian against Indian. The Sac tribe is just as clever as the Pottowattomie, and old Black Hawk is no fool. You don't suppose he'd go around telling everybody just where he intended to strike first, do you?"

"Perhaps not."

"*Perhaps* not," exclaimed Robert. "You mean *certainly* not, I guess. If I intended to

attack you, you don't think for an instant that I'd go around telling everybody, do you? If I did, some one would be sure to tell you, and what chance then would I have of being successful?"

"You'd make a great chief, Bob," said Joseph laughingly.

"Not at all," protested Robert. "I'm just stating what seems to me to be common-sense."

"You're right, of course," agreed Joseph quickly, becoming serious once more. "I think we're in a dangerous position and I wish we were out of it."

"Does mother know?"

"Father wouldn't let me tell her. He said it would only worry her and the girls, and there was no use in it."

"We'll talk to him tonight, both of us."

"It won't do any good, I'm afraid. You know how stubborn he is. He thinks there's no danger, and no one can change his mind by talking to him."

"Well," said Robert, "I hope he's right. But if he's wrong I hope he'll find it out and change his mind before it is too late."

"Anyway," exclaimed Joseph, "it won't do us

any good to stand here and talk about it and it won't help the corn to grow, either. Let's forget it, if we can."

The two young pioneers lapsed into silence and soon the only sound heard in the cornfield was the click of their hoes as they dug the weeds out of the soil and cleared a space for the tender shoots to gain the light and air. The thought uppermost in the mind of each boy, however, was of Black Hawk and his band of marauding warriors.

It is hard for us to understand in these days what a peril and a menace to frontier life these hostile Indians were. Every little while word would come of some family wiped out by the uprising of a nearby tribe and no one could tell at just what moment these onslaughts might come.

Everyone went armed, not only for the sake of the game which provided much of the food on which the pioneers lived, but also as a guard against any surprise attack of warlike redmen. It is needless to state the country abounded in "crack shots," as the most skillful in the use of the rifle were termed. Ammunition was scarce and no one could afford to waste powder or

bullets. Consequently they made every shot count and it was wonderful to see the skill some of our early settlers acquired with the rifle. In this sport, or rather in this serious business, no one in the region surpassed Joseph Hall and his brother Robert.

Through the warm spring afternoon the two brothers toiled on in the cornfield. Their hands were busy with the hoe and their minds with thoughts of Black Hawk and his warriors. The shadows grew longer, and when at last dusk crept over the land they made ready to cease work for the day. As they were preparing to stop, the call of a quail sounded from the woods close to the place where the two boys were standing. Both boys were immediately alert. A moment later the call was repeated.

"Deerfoot," exclaimed Joseph in a low voice.

The two brothers hastened in the direction from which the call had been heard and a moment later discovered their Indian friend hiding behind a thick bush, waiting for them. He was nearly exhausted and had evidently traveled far and fast.

"What is it, Deerfoot?" exclaimed Joseph eagerly. "What is the trouble?"

The Indian was panting and a brief time elapsed before he could speak. Finally he regained his breath.

"Black Hawk, he come!" gasped Deerfoot, and he pointed toward the opposite end of the clearing.

Hardly had he uttered these words when from the direction of the Hall's cabin came the blood-curdling sound of the Indian war whoop.

CHAPTER II

PURSUED

BOTH boys immediately darted toward the bush where their rifles were hidden. Silently and swiftly they ran and then at their highest speed returned to the spot where Deerfoot lay crouched upon the ground. The air now resounded with the terrible war cry of the marauding Indians and shots rang out through the evening air.

"Come on, Bob," exclaimed Joseph, as he swiftly started forward.

He had taken only a few steps, however, when he felt himself gripped strongly by his arm and held back.

"No be a fool," muttered Deerfoot. "Black Hawk have fifty braves. You be killed unless stay here."

"But my family, my mother and sisters,"

pleaded Joseph. "They will be killed unless I go to help them."

"They be killed anyway," said Deerfoot stoically. "No use you be killed, too."

With one hand he held Joseph in a grip of iron, while with the other he maintained a firm hold on Robert. Both boys struggled to free themselves but to no avail. Their Indian ally held them fast, while all the time in a low voice he talked to his young friends.

"Black Hawk come with big band," he explained. "Me run ten mile to warn Halls. Black Hawk say he kill your father. He say your father bad to Indian. No use you be killed, too. Soon they look for you. You better run. Deerfoot take you away safe."

"No! No!" protested Joseph and Robert in one breath.

"Let go of me, Deerfoot!" exclaimed Joseph. "Do you think I can leave, while my family are being murdered? Let me go, I say!"

"Deerfoot no let go," replied the Indian calmly.

The air now was resounding with the cries of the bloodthirsty redmen. If the wild shouts provided a just basis by which to estimate the

numbers in the attacking party then it must be as large as Deerfoot had declared it to be, the boys concluded. In their hearts both boys were already convinced that whatever they might do would be of no avail. At the same time it is not easy to watch an attack upon one's family, and both boys would rather have lost their own lives than to sit quietly by without making an effort to aid.

Every time the war whoop sounded a shudder ran through them and they begged Deerfoot for a chance to try to protect or avenge their father, mother and sisters. Both boys knew well that when an Indian makes war he spares no one from the head of the family down to the baby in the cradle. They already were convinced that soon they would be the only survivors in what had but recently been a family of six.

Suddenly Robert wrenched himself free from Deerfoot's hold and sprang to his feet. Night was rapidly coming on and objects at a distance were hard to distinguish. Through the gathering dusk he could see his home in the distance. It had been set on fire and around and around it the red marauders were dancing, sending

forth their fiendish shouts of victory. Undoubtedly everyone in the house was now dead and soon only the charred remains of what had once been their home would remain.

An ungovernable feeling of rage surged up in Robert's breast and he vowed vengeance. He raised his rifle to his shoulder and took careful aim. Never in his life had he been more self-controlled in his actions than he was at that moment. The roof of the cabin suddenly burst into flame and lighted up the awful scene being enacted nearby. As he pulled the trigger one of the Indians suddenly leaped high into the air and fell headlong upon his face and lay still. Robert's aim had been true.

As if by magic the war dance of Black Hawk's band abruptly ceased. Comrades rushed to the side of the fallen brave and tried to lift him to his feet. Their efforts, however, were without avail; the warrior was dead. As soon as the others became aware of the fall of their comrade they immediately turned to see from which direction the fatal shot had come.

As often happens at sundown there was no breeze stirring. Rising among the trees over the spot where Robert and his two companions

were standing, appeared the smoke from the young frontiersman's gun. The sharp-eyed Sac Indians immediately spied this and with a shout of rage a score or more of them started at full speed in the direction of the tell-tale smoke.

When Robert had fired his rifle, Deerfoot realized that their position was now disclosed and he instantly released his hold on Joseph. There was no advantage to be gained by any further attempt to hide. Joseph gained his feet just as the hostile Indians spied the smoke from his brother's gun, and hastily taking aim he fired at the approaching warriors. The fact that one of them stopped suddenly and clutched his shoulder proved that Joseph as well as Robert was skillful in the use of a rifle.

"Fools!" exclaimed Deerfoot in the ears of the two boys.

"But, Deerfoot—" began Robert, at the same time hastening to reload his gun.

"Come!" exclaimed Deerfoot, breaking in upon him. "Come, if you no wish to die."

Without a word he turned and sped into the forest, the two boys closely following him. Less than a quarter of a mile behind them they could

hear the war cry of the enraged redmen, hot upon their trail. This was no time to think of family or anything else except self preservation. Both boys realized that this was to be a race with a prize of life or death at the finish, and this knowledge provided them with additional strength.

With Deerfoot in the lead, they fled silently and swiftly through the fast gathering darkness of the forest. If they could outstrip their pursuers and keep out of their way until darkness fell, then their chances of escape would be redoubled. They were fully aware of this fact and they knew also that the foes at their heels knew it, too. Deerfoot set a heart-breaking pace and if the two brothers had not been in excellent condition they never could have hoped to maintain the speed with which they were running.

Neither boy had any idea of the direction in which they were fleeing. They followed their leader blindly, trusting implicitly in him to save them. Their entire attention was centered in Deerfoot and they paid no attention to any task other than that of doing their utmost to keep pace with their leader.

Behind them resounded the shouts of their pursuers and the fugitives seemed to acquire renewed speed every time they heard the blood-curdling cries.

At length, however, they began to weaken. No one was able to maintain such a pace very much farther. At least that is what both Robert and Joseph were thinking. They still had their rifles, and they were determined to hold them at any cost. The guns were heavy, however, and undoubtedly prevented the boys from maintaining their speed.

The darkness increased and Deerfoot began steadily to draw away from his two young friends. Born and reared in the woods, and lightly dressed, he proved more than a match for the fast tiring brothers. They struggled desperately to keep up but they both realized that before long they would be compelled to stop. And ever nearer sounded the war whoop of the Sacs.

"I can't go much farther, Deerfoot," panted Joseph.

"Nor I," gasped Robert.

At the word the flying Indian slackened his pace and waited for the boys to catch up.

"Only little more," he exclaimed, "no stop now. All die if stop now."

"But where are you taking us?" exclaimed Joseph.

"Follow Deerfoot, he show you," and once again the fleet-footed Indian sped down the darkening aisles of the forest. Night was now so near at hand that it was with difficulty that the two boys kept their guide in sight. They made one last effort, however, and exerting all the strength and will power they possessed they managed to follow where Deerfoot led.

Suddenly the Indian stopped.

"Black Hawk no see trail now," he exclaimed. "We hide here."

He darted behind a huge tree as he spoke, the boys instantly following his example.

"Where are we going to hide?" demanded Joseph.

"Follow Deerfoot," and as he spoke the Indian began to climb the nearest tree. Seemingly he went directly up the side of the tree and there were no branches to which he might cling for a considerable distance above the ground.

"Steps in tree," announced Deerfoot, stop-

ping when he had gone a few feet. "You find 'um easy. Follow Deerfoot."

Standing where Deerfoot had stood Joseph ran his hands over the bark of the huge oak tree. Sure enough, steps large enough and deep enough to render climbing comparatively safe had been cut into the side of the tree. They were just about as far apart as the rungs of a ladder and having once started on the strange stairway it was very easy to continue. Joseph and Robert speedily discovered this condition and soon were following Deerfoot as he directed them and were moving nearly as rapidly as the Indian himself.

In a very brief time all three had reached the first huge branches of the oak. Here a small platform had been built, consisting of only two or three planks, but they were so arranged that when the three fugitives lay down there was sufficient room for them all. These planks had been cunningly concealed by branches and moss, though naturally the boys did not know this in the darkness. It was about all they could do to make out the indistinct outlines of the nearby trees.

The description of their activities required

more time than Deerfoot and his two companions consumed in their efforts to gain this place of refuge. In a very short time they were lying prone on the platform and peering eagerly down into the depths of the forest. They had moved cautiously and silently and well it was that they had made no noise. Scarcely were they settled in the place before shadowy forms began to flit past them in the dim light below.

No war whoops now were heard. The redmen were on the trail to avenge their dead comrade and the one who had been wounded, and now that night had fallen they had no desire to disclose their position. Joseph and Robert could not repress an involuntary shudder as they watched their pursuers speed past them. At the same time they had a feeling of satisfaction as they thought that they had thus far outwitted their foes and for the present at least were comparatively safe.

Twenty-seven warriors passed beneath the platform in the old oak tree, according to Joseph's count. Certainly there were enough of them to overcome any resistance the three fugitives could furnish. Night came on, but not for a moment was the vigilance of any one on the

platform relaxed. Hour after hour dragged by and soon the dawn would appear. Robert understood as well as Joseph and Deerfoot, that when morning came their position would no longer be safe. With the coming of the morning light the hostile Indians would surely discover their trail and follow it to the base of the large oak tree. If they were to escape, now was the time to do so.

"Come," said Deerfoot in a low voice.

He cautiously arose and started to make his way down the strange stairway. Joseph and Robert followed closely behind. Slowly and as quietly as possible they descended the tree and soon their feet were on solid ground once more. There they stood for a moment, and then, with Deerfoot in the lead, they started to retrace their course of the night before.

They had covered a hundred yards or more when suddenly from a bush almost directly in front of them came the sharp bark of a rifle. A bullet whistled over their heads.

CHAPTER III

A DEVASTATED HOME

ALL three immediately dropped on their hands and knees. Rifles in hand they scurried for the nearest shelter and awaited developments. A puff of smoke floated upward from the bush whence the shot had come, as the three fugitives stretched themselves prone behind the trunk of a large fallen tree. After many moments of waiting Deerfoot cautiously raised his head.

He dropped back again quickly, however, as a rifle ball splintered the bark scarcely ten inches from him. Evidently their enemy was keeping a sharp lookout. Apparently there was only one Indian in the bush, but neither of the two young pioneers nor their red ally cared to take any chances with him. For some moments there was absolute silence in that part of the

forest where this little drama was being enacted.

Suddenly Deerfoot stirred. He evidently had some scheme he wished to put into execution.

"Give Deerfoot hat," he whispered to Joseph, who lay next to him.

Without hesitation Joseph did as he was told. Deerfoot pulled a strip of bark from the fallen tree and placed the hat upon one end of it, while he held to the other. Cautiously and slowly he raised the hat until it showed above their shelter. Immediately it was fired upon.

Deerfoot turned to his young friends and smiled grimly.

"I do that again," he whispered. "When he fire, white boys jump to feet and fire too. We take him by surprise."

"A fine idea," exclaimed Joseph eagerly. "Are you all ready, Bob?"

"All ready," replied Robert quietly. "Just give me the signal."

The two boys crouched, guns in hand, ready to spring to their feet instantly. Deerfoot also prepared to do his part. He lay on his back and slowly raised the hat; it was a nervous moment for the three people behind the fallen

tree trunk. They did not know whether or not their foe would be deceived by their strategy and they could not be sure that only one hostile redman lurked in the nearby bush. Day had now come, however, and it was high time for them to move on. In a short time that portion of Black Hawk's band which had pursued them the night before might once more appear and then their escape would be hopeless.

So gradually did Deerfoot raise the hat that it scarcely seemed to move. Little by little, however, it was elevated on the stick until it showed above the fallen log. Joseph and Robert waited with every muscle tense, ready to spring to their feet the instant their enemy should fire. If Deerfoot's strategy succeeded and if there was only one Indian who barred their way the three fugitives would soon be able to resume their journey.

After what seemed to the two young pioneers to be a very long time the hat appeared above the log. Now was the important moment, and of the three persons hiding behind the fallen tree, two of them at least were very nervous. The success or failure of their scheme would now be determined in a very short time.

"Joseph and Robert waited with every muscle tense."

When at least two inches of the hat was exposed to view, Deerfoot waited. Nothing happened, however. He raised the hat a bit higher. Still there was no result. Perhaps their foe suspected a plot and was determined not to be caught. That such could be the case seemed most improbable, however. Deerfoot raised the hat still a little higher and moved it slightly to one side, as if its owner was trying to conceal himself behind something.

Bang! A shot suddenly struck the hat squarely in the center and splintered the stick, tearing it from Deerfoot's hand.

"Now, Bob," exclaimed Joseph, springing to his feet.

Both boys immediately jumped up and taking quick aim fired into the bush whence the bullets had come. Then they once more dodged behind the sheltering log. A shrill cry at that moment startled them, however, and looking up they saw Deerfoot, knife in hand, charging the spot where their enemy was located. He uttered the war whoop of the Pottowattomies and it was this that the boys had heard.

"We mustn't let him go alone," cried Robert, and as he spoke the two young woodsmen dashed

forward to lend what assistance they could to their ally.

There was nothing for them to do, however, when they reached the bush. Stretched upon the ground lay the Indian who had so nearly succeeded in shooting and perhaps killing one of the three. Hideous he looked in his gaudy war paint, smeared as he was with it from head to foot. One glance was sufficient to convince the two brothers that their foe was dead, and it was hard for them to repress a shudder, as they looked at the cruel face on the ground before them, and realized what might have been their fate had they fallen into the hands of such an enemy.

"Deerfoot, you mustn't do that!" exclaimed Joseph suddenly.

Knife in hand Deerfoot was busily engaged in scalping his fallen foe. As Joseph spoke, their Indian ally muttered something, but did not stop the work in which he was engaged.

"Deerfoot—" began Joseph again, when Robert interrupted him.

"Let him alone, Joe," he cautioned in a low voice. "It is his custom to do that and he won't like it if we stop him."

"I guess you're right," agreed Joseph. "I can't look at him, though," and he turned his back on the revolting scene being enacted on the ground at his feet. The two young pioneers withdrew a short distance and waited for Deerfoot to join them.

"That was a lucky shot that one of us made," remarked Joseph.

"I should say so," agreed Robert, who was busily engaged in reloading his gun. "I wonder which one of us hit him."

"I know I didn't see him when I fired," said Joseph. "I just aimed at the bush and trusted to luck."

"The same thing I did," exclaimed Joseph.

"Well, as long as we were successful it doesn't make much difference who it was that hit him, I guess," said Robert.

At this moment Deerfoot came to the place where the boys were standing. Joseph could not help noticing the fresh scalp dangling at the belt of the Indian and he felt a chill run up and down his spine at the sight. As Robert had said, however, Deerfoot had only done what was customary with his people and as he knew no better, he was not to be blamed.

"Come," said Deerfoot. "Black Hawk soon find trail. Maybe he hear shots too. We better go."

"Where are we going?" demanded Joseph.

"Follow Deerfoot," replied the Indian calmly.

"I want to go home," exclaimed Joseph.

"So do I," echoed Robert. "I want to know what has happened to our family."

"No go home," protested Deerfoot. "All family dead. You know that."

"That may be true," said Joseph, "but I want to see with my own eyes. Do you think I could just go away now and never know for sure that all my family were dead? Even if they have been killed, and I'm afraid that's what has happened, I want to go back. I want to give them a decent burial at least."

"That's just the way I feel," exclaimed Robert.

"You may be killed, too," protested Deerfoot.

"I'll take that chance," insisted Joseph. "You don't have to go with us if you don't want to, you know. At any rate I think that would be the last place they would think of looking for us. They won't think that we'll dare go back there."

"That's right, Joe," exclaimed his brother. "Are you going with us, Deerfoot?"

"Deerfoot go where you go," said the Indian shortly.

Without another word they set out. Deerfoot led the way as usual, with the two brothers following close behind him. Extreme caution was used, as they did not know when the hostile band of Indians might suddenly loom up in their path. They had covered not more than a mile when Deerfoot suddenly held up his hand and the boys instantly came to a full stop.

"There house," said Deerfoot, pointing ahead of him as he spoke.

Sure enough. Through the trees the young brothers could see a clearing which they immediately recognized as theirs. They saw no house, however. Steadily they crept nearer to the edge of the forest and a heart-rending scene lay spread before their eyes. What had once been a sturdy little cabin was now a mass of blackened embers from which a thin spiral of smoke was still curling.

"Do you suppose it's safe to go closer?" asked Robert in a sorrow-stricken voice. "Out into the clearing, I mean."

"I don't know whether it is or not," replied Joseph. "But I do know that I am going anyway."

The two brothers stepped out from the shelter of the trees and approached their ruined home. They held their guns ready for immediate use, however, and they were alert to any danger which might arise. Deerfoot walked at their side.

"Me keep guard," he said. "No stay long though, please."

"No, not long, Deerfoot," promised Joseph. The Indian took up his post in the tiny orchard that the Hall family had nursed so carefully, while the two boys went forward to examine the ruins.

The devastation had been complete. The smouldering pile of charred ruins alone bore witness to the fact that a house had once stood on the site. The two young brothers were too completely overcome to speak for several moments. All they could do was to stand and look sorrowfully at the ruins of what had once been their home.

"We can't do much here, I guess," said Joseph at length.

"No," replied Robert, choking back a sob. "It looks as though Black Hawk and his band have made a good job of it."

"In those ruins," went on Joseph bitterly, "undoubtedly lie the bodies of our father and mother and our two sisters. Just think of it; at this time yesterday they were alive and happy. Now they are all dead, burned up by the flames of their own home and no doubt their scalps have been taken, just as Deerfoot took the scalp of that Indian in the woods this morning."

"Well," exclaimed Robert, "one thing is sure and that is that I shall never rest until I have avenged their deaths. From now on I swear enmity to Black Hawk and all his tribe. I'll have revenge or die in the attempt. That much I'm certain of."

"Look there!" said Joseph. "They didn't even spare Shep."

A few feet away lay the body of a collie dog, a bullet through his brain. Shep, the playmate and faithful friend of the Hall family, one that had shared their fortunes uncomplainingly, whether they were good or bad, had also fallen a victim to the blood lust of the hostile redmen.

"We'll avenge Shep too," exclaimed Robert earnestly. "Come on, Joe! We can't do any good here and we are probably in danger too. Let's find Deerfoot and get out of here as fast as we can."

"Where are we going to go?"

"I haven't an idea. I haven't thought that far. All I know is I want to get away from here. The other settlers ought to be warned too before the same thing happens to them that has happened to our family."

"All right," agreed Joseph. "Let's find Deerfoot and go somewhere. I don't care much where it is either."

When he saw the two brothers approaching to meet him Deerfoot hastened toward them.

"Must hurry," he exclaimed. "I think Black Hawk come soon."

Not even asking where he intended to go, Joseph and Robert followed Deerfoot and in a half-dazed condition walked beside him. To be made orphans as suddenly and as unexpectedly as these two boys had been, would be a shock to anyone and both young frontiersmen felt their loss keenly.

They made their way across the clearing and were just about to enter the woods when from behind them came the sharp bark of a rifle. A bullet sang above their heads and buried itself in a nearby tree.

CHAPTER IV

A HIDDEN RETREAT

NEITHER Joseph nor Robert nor Deerfoot stopped to see who it was that had fired at them. Without a word they plunged quickly in among the trees and once again started on a race for their lives. From behind them came the faint sounds of the war whoops, which only served to increase the speed of the three fugitives.

They had baffled and eluded their pursuers the night previous, but could they do it again? That was the thought uppermost in the minds of the three hunted men who were once more closely pressed by their enemies. Certainly they intended to do their utmost.

No sounds reached them from behind now, but this did not mean that their foes had given up the chase. The two brothers and their Indian

friend realized that this time it was to be a race to a finish. Black Hawk and his band had been foiled once and consequently it would be all the harder to escape them the second time. The three fugitives knew that their enemies would keep up the pursuit until the race was definitely settled.

On and on Deerfoot led the way until they emerged from the woods onto the open prairie. There was an open space, at least a mile wide here, bordered on both sides by the forest and directly out upon this Deerfoot sped.

"They'll see us here surely, Deerfoot," panted Joseph. "We'll be in plain sight and they can easily shoot us down."

"Follow Deerfoot," came the short, sharp reply, and neither Joseph nor his brother offered any more objections.

Deerfoot did not go far from the shelter of the trees, however. He ran perhaps twenty-five or thirty yards from the border of the forest and then turned abruptly to his left. The ground was hard here and the trail as a consequence difficult to follow. Deerfoot kept on in this new course perhaps fifty yards more and then made another sharp turn to his left. This

brought them back toward the woods once more.

Both boys now saw Deerfoot's plan. He was doubling on his tracks. The ground on the prairie was hard and along the surface of the earth ran a vein of solid rock. It would be almost impossible to follow a trail there, at least with any degree of speed, and Deerfoot had counted upon that as an aid. He hoped to gain a few precious moments by his strategy.

Safe within the shelter of the forest, once more the wily Pottowattomie called a halt. The three fugitives crouched behind the shelter of a bush and gazed eagerly out across the prairie. They were all out of wind and a chance to regain their lost breath was heartily welcomed.

"Think we've thrown them off the trail?" whispered Joseph.

"No for long," replied Deerfoot quietly.

As he spoke an Indian bounded out of the woods, closely followed by several more. They all stopped and looked about them in a puzzled manner, and as more of their companions at that time joined them, a hasty consultation was held. They gesticulated and pointed in all directions, evidently at a loss what to do next.

One of them pointed to the woods beyond the prairie, but evidently the others did not think their quarry could have gained enough ground to have reached that shelter.

"Come," said Deerfoot, slinking away. "They find our trail soon."

"No. Let's not waste any time," agreed Robert, and once more the flight was resumed. Soon they came to a brook. Into this Deerfoot plunged without any hesitation and began making his way down stream as fast as he was able. The two brothers followed closely behind, and, imitating their guide, they jumped from rock to rock when such a course was possible, and at other times they waded in the shallow waters of the stream. This was another trick to throw their pursuers off the trail. Evidently Deerfoot was using all his skill and cunning.

Down the stream they went for at least a third of a mile before Deerfoot decided to try the solid earth again. At a small rocky beach they left the brook and struck out through the woods once more. A short time later he once more entered the brook and went ashore on the opposite side. He was doubling on their tracks continually, and certainly no one but a

skilled Indian could follow the course he was leading.

After a further flight they came to Fox River. Along its shores were marshes overhung with willows. From underneath one of these Deerfoot drew a canoe, skillfully hidden in the rushes, and a few moments later the three fugitives were seated in this frail craft, paddling swiftly down the stream.

"We fool them, I think," said Deerfoot grimly. "We fool Black Hawk, all right. He no catch us now."

"I hope you're right," exclaimed Joseph fervently. "I know I should hate to have him catch us."

"I've gotten so I don't much care what happens," said Robert, speaking with difficulty.

"Why, what's the matter?" inquired his brother.

"I'm so tired and so hungry, I feel as if it didn't make much difference what becomes of us. Our family is all gone and what's the use?"

"Don't talk like that," protested Joseph. "Weren't you the one who was swearing vengeance only a couple of hours ago?"

"I know it," admitted Robert mournfully.

"Just think, though, we didn't have any sleep last night and we have had no food since yesterday sometime. I can't keep this up much longer."

"Deerfoot know where food is," exclaimed the Indian. "We be there soon. Also can sleep too."

He had but little sympathy with Robert's complaints. It was a part of his training, and was bred in the blood of every Indian youth, to endure what came and not grumble. Whether he encountered good or bad fortune his attitude was the same and he always looked with contempt at what he considered the weakness of the white people if they complained of their sufferings or misfortunes. He was intensely fond of both Joseph and Robert, however, and he did not hold them personally responsible for what he regarded as a grave fault. In his heart he blamed their race.

"Thank goodness," ejaculated Robert in response to Deerfoot's statement. "Food and sleep are the two things I want most of all right now."

"I need them too," said Joseph. "I think, however, that our hardships have just begun.

That is, if we meant what we said this morning about avenging our family. I know I meant it anyway."

"So did I," exclaimed Robert. "I didn't mean to be a baby just now and it won't happen again. Here, Deerfoot, let me paddle."

"No. Deerfoot paddle," replied the Indian quietly.

His manner immediately changed toward Robert, however, as he saw a revival of spirit in the boy. It was never his custom openly to rebuke either of his young friends. He set an example and took it for granted that the brothers would follow it. He was immensely proud of his young pupils, for it was in this light that he regarded them, and stoical as he was he could not always hide his feelings.

Down the narrow stream they went about two miles. Here the channel became lost in a huge swamp, a place that had always been a mystery and an attraction to the two brothers. They had never explored the swamp to any extent, however, for they invariably lost their bearings when they entered it and experienced difficulty in finding their way out. The channel of Fox River was easily discerned and not hard

to follow, but Deerfoot soon left the channel and bore off to his left.

The reeds and rushes grew high in the swamp. Great overhanging trees shut out the sun and made the place dark and gloomy. Here and there muskrat houses appeared and more than once these ratlike denizens of the marshes could be seen hastening to cover at the approach of the canoe. Everything was so still that it had a pronounced effect on the three men in the canoe, as they wound their way in and out along the narrow waterways.

Deerfoot seemed perfectly sure of his course and did not once hesitate as he skillfully maneuvered the frail craft through the swamp. In absolute silence they progressed, the hoarse croak of a heron disturbed by their approach being the only sound to break the stillness.

The narrow channel suddenly turned sharply to the right and a small lagoon appeared before the eyes of the three fugitives. In the center of the little lake was an island about a hundred feet square and heavily wooded.

"There place," said Deerfoot calmly.

"Can we land there?" questioned Robert doubtfully. "It looks pretty swampy to me."

"No swamp in middle," replied the Indian.

A few powerful strokes of the paddle brought them to the shore of the tiny island. Beneath the low hanging branches of a great willow tree they glided and a moment later stepped ashore. Deerfoot carefully drew the canoe out of the water and concealed it behind the screen of a heavy growth of bushes.

The ground was wet and marshy near the shore, but a few yards farther inland it rose abruptly, affording a firm, dry footing. Robert and Joseph followed Deerfoot as he led the way to the very center of the island. Here was a log hut, only a few feet high and carefully hidden by vines which had grown until they entirely covered the building. A narrow window afforded fresh air and a scanty supply of light.

The Indian stooped and unfastened the low door. Then on his hands and knees he crawled inside, closely followed by the two young pioneers. To say they were surprised to find this retreat would be stating the case mildly. Never a word had Deerfoot ever spoken of this island or the hut upon it and neither of the boys had ever suspected that such a place was

located within only a few miles of their own home.

"Just think how many times we have passed this place and yet we've never known a thing about it," remarked Joseph.

"Well, I should say so," exclaimed Robert. They were seated on the hard earthen floor of the tiny house, interestedly examining every detail of their shelter and hiding place. Robert's fatigue and hunger had entirely given way to his interest in his new surroundings. When Deerfoot produced dried venison and corn from a stone closet in one corner, however, these two feelings soon returned.

"Food," said the Indian shortly, offering the provender to the two young brothers. "Then sleep."

No second invitation was needed. The two boys grasped the food like starving men and soon ate all that had been given them. Deerfoot offered them no more and they both knew better than to ask for it. If the Indian had wished them to have more he would have given it to them. A moment later, the food gone, they stretched themselves at full length on the ground, and immediately fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER V

A NEEDED REST

HOW long he slept neither boy knew. Robert was the first to awaken and for some moments he could not remember where he was. The last two days had been so crowded with events that it had all seemed a confused and horrible dream to the young frontiersman. He rubbed his eyes and sat up, bewildered by his strange surroundings.

For some time he sat still, trying to recall where he was and what had brought him to this place. He looked about him and the sight of his brother Joseph stretched upon the ground by his side suddenly brought a remembrance of his recent experiences to his mind. He stretched himself and yawned audibly. At the sound Joseph stirred and opened his eyes.

"Hello, Bob," he said drowsily. "Where are we?"

"That's just what I was trying to think a moment ago," replied Robert. "I know now though. We're on Deerfoot's island in the middle of the swamp."

"Sure enough," exclaimed Joseph, sitting up. "Where's Deerfoot?"

"I've no idea. I just woke up."

"What time is it?"

"I don't know. It's broad daylight outside though."

"It must be afternoon then," said Joseph. "We arrived here sometime in the forenoon, I think."

"Yes, I know we did. I don't think it's afternoon though."

"Why not?"

"Because I feel very much rested. I think it must be tomorrow morning, if you understand what I mean by that remark."

"You mean we've slept nearly all day, and all night, too, I suppose."

"Yes," said Robert. "That's exactly what I mean."

"Impossible."

"Not at all. That would only bring us up to our average anyway."

Joseph made his way to the window and looked out. "Perhaps you're right," he agreed. "It does look sort of like early morning outside."

"Don't you think we ought to find Deerfoot?"

"We might look for him anyway. Let's go out."

They crawled out through the low door and after scanning the landscape for possible signs of an enemy both stood up. Deerfoot was nowhere to be seen.

"Let's look for the canoe," suggested Robert. "If that is gone, Deerfoot is with it somewhere."

They walked quickly to the place where the canoe had been hidden, but it was not to be found.

"Where do you suppose he has gone?" demanded Joseph.

"I've no idea. Scouting, I guess."

"I hope nothing happens to him," exclaimed Joseph. "Suppose he should be killed. We'd be left in a nice fix; on an island in the middle of a swamp we know nothing about, and with no boat to take us off."

"Don't worry about anything happening to Deerfoot," said Robert confidently. "He'll be back here safe and sound before long."

"I hope you're right. Let's go back to the hut and wait there."

A few moments later the boys seated themselves in front of the little log cabin. They sat where the sun would shine directly upon them, for the early morning air was cold. They took especial care, however, to select a place where they would not be exposed to the view of any chance passerby. They knew enough about Indians to realize that one can never be too careful when attempting to remain hidden from them. An Indian will see the smoke of a camp-fire for miles distant; the slightest noise will alarm him, and a trail is an open book for him to read.

"Do you suppose Black Hawk and his band could trace us here?"

"I doubt it," said Joseph in response to his brother's query. "They might have followed our trail up to the spot where we took the canoe. I don't see how any human being could track us to this island though. If we are discovered it will only be by luck."

Though hidden from the sight of passersby, the two boys were in a position where they could see all that occurred on the lagoon. As his brother finished speaking Robert half rose to his feet.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

"It's Deerfoot," said Joseph, gazing in the direction Robert indicated.

Across the lagoon sped the canoe, propelled by the expert paddle of the Pottowattomie. A moment later Deerfoot landed, drew the canoe ashore and approached the cabin door where the boys were seated. In one hand he held a string of perch and in the other he carried a duck.

What the two brothers both noticed at once, however, was the fact that from his belt now dangled two scalps where the day previous there had been but one. Neither boy dared ask an explanation, however, for they knew that if Deerfoot cared to tell of his exploit he would do so voluntarily. Questions would have no effect upon him other than to make him angry, for curiosity as to other people's affairs was always regarded by an Indian as very bad breeding.

"Boys sleep long," said Deerfoot, when he had come to the place where they were seated.

"Yes, Deerfoot," agreed Joseph. "We were very tired."

"Me catch fish and duck," said the Indian.

"So we see," laughed Joseph. "How did you do it?"

"Fish with hook. Duck with snare. How you s'pose?"

"I didn't know," replied Joseph meekly. He considered Deerfoot's reply a rebuke, for evidently the Indian took it for granted that he should know how the game had been captured. The Pottowattomie did not care for useless questions.

"Did you see anything of Black Hawk?" asked Robert.

"No see him," replied Deerfoot, who at once began the work of cleaning the fish he had caught. Robert asked no more questions and as Deerfoot did not offer to tell how he had captured the second scalp, the matter was evidently closed, at least for the present. Both boys were burning with curiosity, but to no purpose. Some day perhaps, if Deerfoot felt so inclined, he would tell them all about his

exploit, but this he apparently did not consider the proper time to do so.

"How long do you expect to stay here, Deerfoot?" inquired Joseph after several moments of silence. The Indian was cleaning the last fish and he made no reply until he had finished. The task did not consume much time, however, for the Pottowattomie was an expert in this art. He laid the fish upon a flat stone with the others, wiped his knife clean and then answered Joseph's question.

"We leave tonight," he said.

"Where are we going?" demanded Joseph and Robert in one breath.

"Dixon's Ferry."

"Dixon's Ferry!" exclaimed Joseph. "Why, that's a long distance from here."

"I know," agreed Deerfoot. "We go there. Soldiers there, too."

"Is that so?" cried Joseph in surprise. "You mean soldiers sent against Black Hawk?"

"Yes," said the Indian. "Governor Reynolds send soldiers."

"How do you know all this?" inquired Robert doubtfully.

"Me know," replied Deerfoot shortly. He

did not like to have his statements questioned, and immediately lapsed into silence. He ignored any further remarks on the subject made by either of the brothers, and busied himself in his preparations for the meal.

He quickly brought dried birch logs from inside the cabin and a moment later had a cheerful fire blazing. The wood he used did not smoke, so that any danger on that score was removed. As soon as the fire was well under way he seized the captured duck, holding it by its head with one hand and by its feet with the other. A moment later all of its feathers were singed off by the fire and he soon had the wild fowl skillfully prepared for cooking.

Before long a splendid bed of coals had collected and in these Deerfoot placed the fish. The duck he spitted on a sharp stick and soon the savory smell of cooking food reminded the young pioneers how hungry they were. When the perch were done they were rolled in corn meal and quickly disappeared down the throats of the three fugitives. When the duck was eaten and the fire extinguished they settled back against the side of the cabin, feeling very much

at peace with the world, in spite of their precarious position.

"Not dark for long while," said Deerfoot. "Boys better sleep."

"What?" exclaimed Joseph. "You don't think we can sleep all the time, do you? I feel as if I never wanted to sleep again."

"You feel different tomorrow maybe."

"That may be so, but I can't sleep now, that's sure. How do you feel, Bob?"

"Entirely slept out," replied Robert, his remark followed by a yawn, however.

All three lapsed into silence while they scanned the surrounding landscape and wished for the coming of night. The quiet of the swamp was undisturbed save for the occasional call of a wild fowl or a splash caused by the jump of a fish. The wind blowing gently through the trees and rushes furnished a drowsy hum as a background to the other noises. As far as one could judge from appearances in the swamp, all the world was at peace. Little would anyone suspect that the three men on the tiny island had been forced to seek that refuge because of hostile Indians.

"Where is Black Hawk's village?" asked Joseph suddenly.

"Where Rock River meet Mississippi," replied Deerfoot. "That was his village."

"Why do you say *was?*"

"White people take it away from him," said Deerfoot.

"Is that why he's fighting?" inquired Joseph. "If they stole his village, then I don't blame him."

"Don't forget this though," exclaimed Robert hotly. "The Whites may have cheated the Indians lots of times, but just the same the Sacs signed a treaty to move across the Mississippi, and they have refused to go. At any rate nothing can excuse their killing our family. We did nothing to Black Hawk or any of his people and I intend to get even if I can. How can the country ever expect to be settled if the people are liable to be murdered at any moment?"

"That's true," agreed Joseph. "It's hard to blame Black Hawk from his point of view though. He probably thinks he's entitled to all this land and that every white settler is a thief who is trying to steal from him."

"Black Hawk isn't the head of his tribe anyway," continued Robert. "Keokuk is the big chief, isn't he, Deerfoot?"

"That right," grunted the Indian. "Black Hawk the war chief. He fighter."

"All Pottowattomies are fighters, aren't they?" said Robert, at the same time covertly nudging Joseph as he spoke. Deerfoot merely grunted but his eyes shone at this remark of his young white friend, and unconsciously he felt for the two scalps at his belt. They were not there, however, but stretched on frames, were drying in the sun before the cabin. They presented a gruesome sight but one from which the brothers found difficulty in keeping their gaze.

Both boys smiled at the pride exhibited by Deerfoot in response to Robert's insinuation as to the prowess of the Pottowattomies. For some time they lazily discussed Black Hawk and his deeds.

Finally Deerfoot stretched himself at full length on the ground and straightway fell asleep. In spite of their long rest the two brothers soon followed his example; they had been more tired than they realized and were

soon in the land of dreams. They were awakened by Deerfoot shaking them gently by the shoulder. When they opened their eyes it was dusk.

"Come," urged Deerfoot. "Time to go."

CHAPTER VI

A NEW DANGER

DEERFOOT offered the two boys dried venison and some cakes made of corn meal. The three fugitives partook heartily of this simple repast and then prepared to continue their flight. Silently and with extreme caution they made their way to the place where the canoe lay hidden and a few moments later all three embarked. The night was dark, but this fact did not seem to trouble Deerfoot. He wielded the paddle and with strong, sure strokes propelled the light canoe swiftly over the waters of the lagoon.

In a short time they were once more among the rushes and through the narrow waterways Deerfoot paddled the frail craft as confidently as a man might walk down the street of some familiar town. Joseph and Robert crouched

low in the canoe, made no sound, but constantly marveled at the skill of their Indian friend, who so easily found his way in the marshes.

Presently they emerged from the swamp into the main channel of the river. As close to the shore as possible Deerfoot steered his course and now did scarcely more than guide the canoe; he allowed the current to carry them along. Although it was somewhat sluggish here, the Indian seemed to be content with the speed they were making. So quietly did the canoe drift down the stream and so dark was the night that an observer from the shore might easily have mistaken the ghostlike object for a floating log.

The motion of the canoe was so soothing and all about them everything seemed so quiet and peaceful that the two brothers almost forgot the danger they were in, and had nearly fallen asleep again when the grating of the bow on a sandy beach quickly aroused them.

"Out here," whispered Deerfoot.

A moment later the canoe had been hauled ashore and hidden, and without further delay Joseph and Robert followed their Indian guide as he struck out through the woods.

On the river the night had seemed dark, but in the woods it was pitchy black. The great overhanging trees shut out whatever feeble light the stars might give, so that the forest was inky dark. As a consequence progress was very slow. Deerfoot did not even for a moment relax his caution; the three fugitives proceeded one behind the other and so close that they could almost touch one another. Speed was sacrificed to quietness and as a consequence it required the better part of an hour to traverse this strip of woods, though it was only a half-mile wide.

At last they emerged from the shelter of the forest onto the prairie. Far ahead of them it stretched like the waters of a huge lake, apparently boundless in its extent. Bushes formed the only cover on this vast expanse of level country and both Joseph and Robert could not help wondering what they should do if their enemies should discover them while they were crossing this plain. There was no choice, however, if they wished to reach Dixon's Ferry, and the chance must be taken.

Soon their progress was more rapid. Swiftly they walked and as the moon broke from be-

hind a cloud its rays made the three figures look like ghosts, as, bending low, they hurried forward on their perilous journey. Mile after mile they covered and scarcely a word had been spoken since they left Deerfoot's hut on the island in the swamp. Finally, however, the Indian called a halt.

"We rest here," he exclaimed, pointing to a clump of bushes nearby as he spoke.

"Good," said Joseph heartily. "That was a fast pace, Deerfoot."

"Huh," grunted the Indian. "Must hurry."

"Are we going to travel all day, too?" inquired Robert. He had sunk to the ground as soon as their march had ceased, and now, stripped of his gun, he lay at full length upon the earth.

"No," said Deerfoot in response to Robert's question. "We stay Scott's today."

"Scott's!" exclaimed Robert. "Where is that?"

"On prairie," replied Deerfoot. "You know Scott's."

"I do," said Joseph, turning to his brother as he spoke. "Don't you remember that family that stopped at our house about five or six

years ago, Bob? They had come from Virginia and we heard later that they had settled out on the prairie here. You must remember them."

"I sort of recall something about them," agreed Robert. "How far from here is their house, Deerfoot?"

"Six miles."

"We'll reach there early in the morning then, won't we?"

"Daylight," said Deerfoot. "We stay here half hour, then go on again."

"When ought we to reach Dixon's Ferry?" asked Joseph.

"Tomorrow, mebbe. Mebbe next day," grunted Deerfoot, and rolling over on his back the Indian immediately fell asleep.

"Look at that," exclaimed Joseph. "He is just like a dog and can go to sleep whenever he feels like it. I wish I could do it."

"It's all practice," said Robert. "Deerfoot has been trained to it all his life and that's why he can do it now."

"Well, you and I had better try to rest, too," said Joseph, as he stretched himself on the ground beside Deerfoot.

"Suppose we all go to sleep and no one wakes up in a half an hour?"

"Don't worry about that. Deerfoot will wake up all right."

The brothers lapsed into silence but they did not sleep. They had had more rest than Deerfoot recently and were not in such need of sleep as was their guide. In addition, the ground was hard and lumpy, and no matter which way they adjusted themselves it seemed as if some particularly hard bump was immediately underneath them. The ground was hard and the grass was dry, for but little rain had fallen recently, and this fact only served to make their beds more uncomfortable. They obtained some rest, however, and were ready to start again when Deerfoot gave the word.

He opened his eyes presently and sat up. A moment later he sprang to his feet, while the two brothers quickly followed his example.

"Wind blow now," grunted Deerfoot.

"It is freshening," agreed Joseph. "It's right in our faces too."

It was at least two hours before the dawn when they once more resumed their march. The wind blowing over the prairie was cool in

their faces and sweet with the odor of grass and the earth. Soon they would come to the Scott's home where they were confident that they would be heartily welcomed and furnished with a sumptuous meal. Perhaps the Scotts would join them in their flight to Dixon's Ferry; at any rate they could be warned of the presence of warlike Indians in the vicinity. These and similar thoughts occupied the minds of the two brothers as they hurried on their way.

They had covered perhaps five of the six miles when Deerfoot suddenly stopped. He bent slightly forward as if he was listening to something, and imitating him Joseph and Robert both listened intently. No sound came to them, however, but evidently the case was different with Deerfoot. For some moments he remained in a listening attitude, and then turned to his young friends.

"War whoop," he said quietly.

"What!" exclaimed Joseph and Robert together.

"War whoop," repeated Deerfoot. "Black Hawk kill Scotts."

"Are you sure?" demanded Joseph. "Are you sure you hear war whoops?"

"Ugh," grunted Deerfoot.

"This is terrible!" cried Joseph. "It seems as if we ought to have warned them. What shall we do?"

"How could we have warned them?" demanded Robert. "We'd have been killed ourselves if we had tried to get here any sooner."

"But what shall we do?"

"I don't know. Ask Deerfoot."

The first faint streaks of dawn were now lighting up the sky. Little by little objects began to be distinguishable and as Joseph turned to Deerfoot for an answer to his question, the Indian pointed to something he saw in the distance. Both boys instantly gazed in the direction he indicated.

"What is it?" demanded Joseph in a low voice.

"Smoke."

"Sure enough," cried Robert. "I see it. They are burning the Scotts' house just as they burned ours. They're probably all dead by now."

Deerfoot was evidently uneasy. He shifted from one foot to the other and glanced about him as if he was undecided what to do next.

The three fugitives simply stood and gazed at the distant column of smoke.

"You can smell the smoke now," exclaimed Robert suddenly.

"Yes," agreed Joseph. "The wind is coming this way."

"So fire," said Deerfoot.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Joseph.

"Fire come this way, too."

"How will it?"

"Prairie burn," said Deerfoot quietly.

"Do you think the prairie will catch on fire?" demanded Joseph in alarm. "Do you think it is dry enough?"

The two young pioneers gazed anxiously across the level plain to the place where the fire was raging. They knew the horrors of a prairie fire and they had no desire to be caught in the midst of one.

"Sure prairie dry," grunted Deerfoot.

"We'd better leave here as fast as we can then, hadn't we?" exclaimed Joseph, now fully alarmed. As he spoke they could see the fire suddenly spring up all about the former home of the Scotts. Fanned by the ever freshening breeze it made its way swiftly along the ground

and gathering power as it ran, leaped into flame and started on its mad career.

"Come," said Deerfoot, and he turned about and ran. The smell of smoke was now strong in their nostrils and this new foe, much more deadly than the former ones, inspired the fugitives with a fear that seemed almost to put wings on their feet. A deer suddenly passed them, wide-eyed and snorting with fright; close behind it sped two gray wolves, the fact that the deer was their quarry apparently being forgotten in the fear of a common peril.

To escape by running around the fire was out of the question. It not only traveled straight ahead, but as it came it continually widened its scope, the wall of flame and smoke growing broader and broader with every moment that passed.

The three men ran as they never had run before. Behind them roared the racing fire, the noise striking terror to the heart of every living thing within hearing distance. Side by side ran men and animals, their ancient enmities forgotten, everyone aware of the fact that a foe more powerful than any of them was at their backs. Water was what they all sought,

and unless they could reach it before the fire did they were lost.

Neither Joseph nor Robert knew of any water nearer than the stream they had left the evening before. It was out of the question to think of gaining that. Perhaps Deerfoot knew of some lake or pond on the prairie. At any rate he could not stop to say so now, and meanwhile the fire raged behind them, ever nearer and constantly increasing in fury.

CHAPTER VII

A NARROW ESCAPE

THE heat from the fire now reached the fleeing men. All the animals had far outdistanced them in their flight and these three were left behind to continue the race. There was no doubt that the fire was gaining on them rapidly. The air about them was full of smoke which choked and at times nearly strangled the three fugitives. As far as either Joseph or Robert could see, there was no place of refuge ahead of them and both boys were now fully convinced that escape was well nigh impossible. They were determined to die fighting, however, and to keep going until the very last.

Joseph glanced behind him as he ran. As he caught a glimpse of the great wall of smoke and flame he could not help thinking, even in this

moment of extreme peril, of the pictures he used to see in the fairy books. The prairie fire he likened to the great dragons that always guarded the ancient treasures. Flame and smoke always issued from their mouths and nostrils, and so tortured was the boy's mind that he suddenly gained the impression that he was being pursued by one of these dragons. Could he escape the ravenous beast? That was the question.

Like a race horse, the fire galloped forward over the prairie. The air was now filled with sparks, while the roar of the seething conflagration grew ever louder in the ears of the fleeing men. Ahead of them, perhaps a quarter of a mile, appeared a row of bushes, and toward this spot Deerfoot seemed to be making his way. Just why he did this neither Robert nor Joseph knew, but they followed blindly the lead of their guide.

Robert was wondering if by any miracle they could escape the awful peril now almost at their heels. Joseph was bent on escaping the dragon roaring behind them, and somehow he felt that if they could reach the clump of bushes they would be safe. Why he felt this way he could

not have explained. They were now within two hundred yards of the bushes, while the fire was not more than twice that distance behind them. The three fugitives were almost exhausted and the fire traveled with at least double the speed that they could make. Consequently the race was an even one.

Neither boy had discarded his rifle. It was almost second nature for a frontiersman to cling to his gun and these two boys were no exception to the rule. Grimly they hung on to their rifles, and stumbling now and then, they still plunged blindly forward. Nearer and nearer they came to the bushes; closer and closer swept the fire. "Can we reach the bushes?" thought Robert, and "Can we escape the dragon?" Joseph kept repeating again and again to himself.

A hundred yards in back of them roared the flames. Scarcely forty yards ahead were the bushes. They were almost enveloped by the smoke and sparks now and it was hard to see clearly. Robert obtained a glimpse of what he took to be a gully just the other side of the bushes. To Joseph's distorted vision appeared a moat with a castle on the opposite side; a guard stood at the portcullis ready to let it fall.

Could he slip through before the dragon seized him?

Just in front of the two brothers was Deerfoot. By words, lost in the roar of the fire, and by gestures he urged the boys on. Their eyes smarted from the smoke and their hearts and lungs seemed to have reached the bursting point, so great was the strain placed upon them. Blindly they staggered forward, their rifles still clutched firmly in their hands. They could see the bushes dimly, only a few steps in front of them now, while the fire seemed almost at their side.

Neither boy knew just why he was striving so hard to reach this row of bushes. What protection could they afford? They were determined to reach this spot, however, and with one last supreme effort they forced their lagging feet forward. They could feel the bushes brush their clothes as they came among them, and then the earth seemed suddenly to give way under their feet and they plunged forward headlong.

After a space of time that might have been minutes, or days for that matter, as far as he at the moment was able to estimate passing

time, Joseph opened his eyes, for he had lost consciousness when he fell. He was lying flat on his back while Deerfoot and Robert splashed water in his face.

"Where is the dragon?" he exclaimed, trying to rise.

"What dragon?" asked Robert, smiling at his brother's remark.

"Why, the dragon that chased us of course."

"You mean the fire, I guess."

"It was a fire after all, wasn't it?" exclaimed Joseph dazedly. "Somehow I got the idea into my head that it was a dragon. I guess I was out of my head."

"Well, that fire was much worse than a dragon or any other animal that ever lived," said Robert feelingly. "I tell you we had a narrow escape."

"Where are we anyway?"

"Get up and look for yourself, if you feel strong enough."

Slowly and with difficulty Joseph raised himself to his feet. Glancing about him he discovered that they were resting near the bank of a small stream on both sides of which the ground rose abruptly ten or twelve feet. So this was

the place to which Deerfoot had led them. How lucky it was that their Indian friend had been familiar enough with the country to know of this place of refuge. As if in a dream Joseph passed his hand across his forehead. It was wet and glancing at his fingers he discovered that they were covered with blood.

"What happened to me?" he demanded.

"You cut your head on a sharp stone when you fell," explained Robert. "It's only a scalp wound though and will soon heal up."

"Where is the fire?"

"It jumped this gully, just after we jumped into it," laughed Robert. "You can hear it roaring on across the prairie now."

"Where's my gun?" exclaimed Joseph suddenly.

"There," said Robert, pointing to Deerfoot. "Your gun landed in the water and Deerfoot rescued it for you." The Indian was busily engaged in cleaning and drying Joseph's rifle, but as Robert spoke he looked up from his task.

"Gun go off," he said quietly.

"What do you mean?" cried Joseph.

"See," said Deerfoot, at the same time pointing to his left sleeve. The Indian's hunting

shirt showed a ragged hole, while on it were spots of blood.

"You mean it went off and hit you?" exclaimed Robert. "I didn't know that, Deerfoot. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Ugh," grunted the Indian in his non-committal manner.

"Let me see it," demanded Joseph in alarm as he grasped Deerfoot by the arm and pulled up his sleeve. The bullet had grazed the flesh of the forearm, breaking the skin, but doing no serious hurt.

"Whew!" gasped Joseph. "It's a lucky thing it didn't kill you, Deerfoot. Certainly it isn't my fault that you're alive now. Why aren't you angry with me?"

"No your fault," replied the Indian, gazing into the eyes of his young white friend. Deerfoot, like the rest of his race, disliked to display his emotions if it could be avoided; but the Pottowattomie often had a hard task to conceal his affection for the two young brothers.

"What would we ever do if we lost you?" cried Joseph. "You're all we have left now, Deerfoot."

The Indian's eyes grew moist at this remark

and he turned quickly away. He washed Joseph's cut and his own wound and then bound a strip of Joseph's shirt around the cut in his head. He then scrambled up the side of the gully to gaze out over the prairie.

"What are we going to do now?" inquired Joseph a few moments later when Deerfoot had returned to the spot where the two boys were seated.

"We stay here today. Go on tonight," replied Deerfoot.

"Isn't it safe to travel in the daylight?"

"No," answered Deerfoot. "Anyway, prairie too hot."

"That's true," exclaimed Robert. "I never thought of that. The grass and bushes in the path of the fire must still be smouldering. We'd probably burn holes in our moccasins if we started now."

"Mine can't stand much either," said Joseph, ruefully looking at his feet. "We've given them some hard usage lately."

"I should say so."

Deerfoot completed the task of cleaning Joseph's gun, and then holding it under his arm he sauntered off along the bank of the stream.

"Be back soon," he called as he disappeared from view around a projecting corner of the bank. The two boys now left alone, sat on the ground and discussed their experiences and what was ahead of them.

"I wish we were at Dixon's Ferry," exclaimed Robert fervently.

"No more than I do," said Joseph.

"I must confess," continued Robert, "that I don't like this business of traveling all night and never knowing when an Indian may jump out from behind some tree and tomahawk me."

"Well," said Joseph, "when we reach Dixon's Ferry we'll be all right. I wonder how many troops are there and what they intend to do?"

"I've no idea. We'll know when we get there."

"If that ever happens."

"You're getting as bad as I am," laughed Robert. "Let's not be so discouraged. Deerfoot will bring us through all right."

"Do you think he knows what is going on at Dixon's Ferry?"

"I don't know. He wouldn't tell us if he did."

"Evidently the Indians must have been causing trouble for some time," remarked Joseph.

"Otherwise the governor wouldn't have sent soldiers after them as soon as this."

"That's right, I guess," Robert agreed. "Probably that band which attacked us was only a detachment of the main body. It was undoubtedly the same one that burned the Scotts' home and started this fire, too."

"Probably it was. If we ever reach Dixon's Ferry we'll know it all. Do you suppose they'll let us enlist?"

"They will if they have any volunteers. They'll have a hard time keeping me out, that's sure."

"I wish—" began Joseph when the sound of a rifle shot suddenly cut him short. Both boys sprang to their feet in alarm. The report came from the direction in which Deerfoot had gone and instantly the two boys' minds were filled with visions of dreadful things happening to their friend.

"Bring your rifle and come along," cried Joseph as he began to run along the bank of the stream. Robert was with him in an instant.

"Hold back here, Joe," he urged. "Let me go ahead; I've got the gun. Take it slow, too."

Cautiously they approached the bend in the

river, Robert slightly in the lead. He was holding his rifle ready for instant use and both boys were prepared for any emergency. As they turned in their course they spied Deerfoot. He was approaching them, holding his rifle in one hand and an enormous jack rabbit in the other. He could not repress a grin of amusement as he saw the hostile attitude of his two young friends.

"We thought you'd been attacked," exclaimed Joseph heaving a great sigh of relief.

"Me shoot rabbit," replied Deerfoot.

"So we see," remarked Joseph. "Don't you think, though, that somebody might have heard the shot and that it may get us into trouble?"

"Nobody to hear shot," said Deerfoot. "Nobody on prairie after fire."

"I guess that's true enough," laughed Robert. "I'm glad to see that old rabbit, too. I suppose he was hiding from the fire as well as we were."

"Yes," said Deerfoot. "He hid. Me find him though."

The two brothers set to work collecting such wood as they could find in the gully and that had escaped the flames; Deerfoot at the same time was busily engaged in skinning the rabbit.

In a short time a fire had been kindled and the odor of roast rabbit filled the air. The meat was delicious, somewhat similar to chicken in flavor, and soon only bones remained to testify that a rabbit had once been near that spot.

Frequently Deerfoot scanned the horizon with a watchful eye and the day was spent in talk and rest. As darkness once more stole over the land, Deerfoot gave the word and again the three fugitives set out on their tramp to Dixon's Ferry.

CHAPTER VIII

AN INDIAN LEGEND

TWO days later they reached their destination. The journey had been a hard one and it was with a great feeling of relief that the three wearied travelers entered the small settlement on Rock River at Dixon's Ferry. On their way they had endured many hardships. Driving rainstorms on the prairies had drenched them to the skin and often they had been forced to flounder their way through deep marshes and swamps.

They had crossed the old Sac trail to Canada on their journey. This tribe, years before, had made its way into Illinois and Wisconsin through the lower Michigan peninsula, its original home being north of the Great Lakes. Deerfoot explained this fact to his young friends, who evinced much interest at the sight

of the old Indian highway. From Black Hawk's village on the Mississippi it ran east to the Illinois River which it crossed several miles north of Hennepin where the river turns almost at right angles. Thence it led along the river to the shores of Lake Michigan and then continued northward into Canada.

At Dixon's Ferry there was much bustle and excitement. Over three hundred men were gathered there under the command of Majors Isaiah Stillman and David Bailey. All volunteers they were and made a reckless, dare-devil force. They had been resting several days and were all impatient at the delay. They were equipped with an abundance of ammunition and supplies, and could see no reason why they should not be allowed to start at once in pursuit of Black Hawk and his band of warriors.

The two brothers and their Pottowattomie ally were enthusiastically received by these men, especially so when Joseph told of the massacre of his family, and how eager they were to avenge it. Fresh clothes had been at once provided for the new members of the battalion, for they had lost no time in enlisting.

A tent was assigned to them and a hearty meal provided.

"I don't like this delay," exclaimed one of the volunteers, Walter Hood by name, to Joseph and Robert. They were seated just outside of the tent occupied by the two brothers and Deerfoot. The Indian had gone off somewhere and Hood, an old trapper, had stopped to chat with the boys. "No sir," he repeated. "I don't like this delay. I want to be on the trail of them redskins and git the job over with."

"What's the reason for the delay?" inquired Joseph.

"We're waiting for more soldiers, that's what it is. There's a whole lot of them on their way here now, and they ought to reach here at almost any minute. I wish we could go along without 'em."

"How many soldiers are on their way here, Mr. Hood?" asked Robert.

"Sixteen hundred or so, but don't you call me Mister Hood. My name is 'Walt.' That is what I've been called all my life and I don't intend to change now."

"All right," laughed Robert. "I'd be very glad to call you 'Walt.'"

"And you, too," exclaimed the old trapper turning to Joseph. "I don't want no funny business from you either."

"I swear," agreed Joseph solemnly, at the same time raising his right hand. "Tell us about these troops though," he added.

"Well," said Walt, "there's about sixteen hundred of them as I told you. Of that number nearly thirteen hundred is on horseback. Governor Reynolds is with the troops, who are commanded by Generals Atkinson and Whiteside. All this news I got from a messenger who arrived here this morning."

"Where are they coming from?" asked Joseph.

"From Fort Armstrong. That's down on the Mississippi you know, right close to Black Hawk's village and right near Rock Island, too."

"We'll have about two thousand men in a few days then, won't we?" exclaimed Joseph. "I don't believe Black Hawk has half that many, do you?"

"I don't think so," agreed Walt. "That's why I want to get started now and not wait for the others. We've got enough men here now

to lick all the Indians in North America as it is."

"That's the way my father used to talk," remarked Robert quietly. "It is a mistake to think that way in my opinion."

"Please don't ever say such a thing before Deerfoot, anyway," urged Joseph. "He is one of the finest men that ever lived and I wouldn't offend him for anything in the world."

"I'll remember that," Walt promised. "All Indians aren't bad anyway," he added so seriously that both boys laughed.

"Did you ever know any well?" asked Robert.

"Yes, indeed. I trapped all one winter with an Ojibway up in Canada. He was a fine fellow and amusing, too. At night we used to sit around our fire and smoke and once in a while I could get him to talk. He knew all the Indian stories and legends from start to finish and they were mighty interesting, too."

"Tell us some of them," urged Joseph eagerly.

"Well, now," said Walt slowly. "I don't know as I can remember them. Certainly I can't tell 'em the way he did."

"That doesn't make any difference," exclaimed Joseph. "Tell them as best you can

and that will be good enough for us. Isn't that so, Bob?"

"I should say so," agreed Robert heartily. "I love those Indian legends."

"All right then," said Walt. "I'll try my best. Did you ever hear the legend of 'The Lone Lightning'?"

"Never," cried both boys. "Tell us that one," urged Joseph eagerly.

The old trapper filled his pipe deliberately. When it was lighted and he had settled himself comfortably against the trunk of a tree and taken a few big puffs, he began his story.

"Once upon a time there was a little orphan boy. He lived with his uncle who treated him very badly and gave him but little to eat. As a result the boy pined away and was thin and slight and never grew much. This treatment went on for a long time and finally the uncle pretended to be greatly ashamed of the way he had abused his nephew. He commenced to feed the boy all he could eat in order to fatten him and to make up for the hard usage he had received. The uncle's real plan, however, was to kill the boy by overfeeding him.

"He told his wife to give the boy plenty of

bear's meat, especially the fat, as that was supposed to be the best part. They used to force food on the boy and one day they nearly choked him to death by trying to cram it down his throat. The boy finally escaped from the lodge, however, and fled into the woods. He did not know his way about and soon got lost. Night fell and the boy was afraid. He climbed high into the branches of a tall pine tree so that the wild animals could not reach him and while up there he fell asleep. While he was asleep he had a dream.

"A person appeared to him from the sky and said, 'My poor little lad, I pity you, and the bad usage you have received from your uncle has led me to visit you; follow me, and step in my tracks.' Immediately the boy awoke and he rose up and followed his guide, mounting higher and higher into the air until finally he reached the sky. Here he was given twelve arrows and told to go to the northern skies where there was a great many manitous or spirits whom he must try to ambush and kill.

"So the lad set out and finally came to that part of the sky. He shot eleven of his twelve arrows in an attempt to kill the manitous, but

he was unsuccessful. Every time he shot an arrow there was a long and solitary streak of lightning in the sky; then all became clear again and not a cloud or spot could be seen. The boy now had but one arrow left and he held this a long time while he searched all about to spy the manitous he was after. This was not an easy task, however, for these manitous were very cunning and could change their form instantly. They feared the boy's arrows, for they were magic, and had been given to him by a good spirit. They had power to kill the manitous if only they were aimed right.

Finally the boy discovered the chief of the manitous. He drew his last arrow, aimed it carefully and let it fly. He had directed his aim straight at the heart of his enemy, but before the arrow could reach him the manitou changed himself into a rock. Into this rock the last magic arrow plunged deep and stuck fast.

" 'Now your gifts are all expended,' cried the enraged manitou, 'and I will make an example of your audacity and pride of heart for lifting your bow against me.' So saying he suddenly changed the boy into the 'Nazliek-a-wa-wa-sun,'

or Lone Lightning which anyone can see in the northern sky even to this day."

The old trapper ceased speaking and relighted his pipe which had gone out during the course of his tale. Both boys remained silent for some minutes.

"That was a strange legend," remarked Joseph at last.

"I should say so," echoed Robert. "I liked it though. I like all these stories of Indians and what they believed."

"So do I," exclaimed Walt. "Indians are a simple-minded people in a great many ways. Their legends mean a lot to them, too."

"Tell me," said Joseph. "What do they mean by 'Lone Lightning'?"

"The northern lights, I suppose," answered Walt. "At least that is what I have always taken that story to mean. If you've ever seen them you know how on clear, cold nights they flash out all over the heavens. You see the boy's last arrow remained stuck in the rock, so that the light from it will always be there. The other eleven just vanished into space, I suppose."

"By manitou you mean a spirit, don't you?" inquired Robert.

"Yes," said Walt. "That's just what I mean. You see there are good spirits and evil spirits and those up in the north were evil. The Great Manitou is the Great Spirit whom all the Indians worship. He is chief of all the manitous."

"You know lots more legends, don't you?" asked Joseph eagerly.

"Why, yes," replied Walt, "I do know a good many."

"Well, we're always willing to listen to them," said Joseph.

"I could hear another right now," suggested Robert hopefully. "Would you mind very much telling us one, Walt?"

"Not at all, except for the fact that from the looks of things I think perhaps our reinforcements are arriving."

"Something is happening all right!" exclaimed Joseph excitedly.

All three immediately sprang to their feet and hurried to the western side of the camp whither everyone else seemed to be bound. Everybody was excitedly calling to everybody else and all were in high spirits at the arrival of the troops.

"Perhaps we can get started now," said Walt

hopefully as he hurried along beside the two boys. "Our waiting days are about over, I guess, and within twenty-four hours I think we'll be on on our way up the old Rock River. Black Hawk had better move on before we get very far, too, I can tell you."

Everybody in the settlement was gathered together in one spot, the center of attention being a mudspattered messenger who was talking to Major Stillman. The boys could not hear what he said but as they came closer to the crowd the messenger turned and pointed. Over the crest of a nearby hill suddenly appeared a man on horseback. Then another came into view, then another, and still another until the whole hill was covered by the band of approaching horsemen.

CHAPTER IX

IN CAMP

JUST look at them!" exclaimed Joseph. "There must be a thousand of them."

"Sixteen hundred you said, didn't you, Walt?" inquired Robert turning to their friend as he spoke.

"Not mounted, I think," replied the trapper. "I guess the rest are coming up the river in boats and won't be here for some time."

"Well, with this crowd we ought to be able to subdue Black Hawk all right," exclaimed Joseph eagerly. "Do you suppose we'll have to wait for the rest of the troops?"

"I hope not," said Walt. "Here it is the twelfth of May already and we should have had the whole thing over with by this time, in my opinion."

As the three volunteers stood talking the

horsemen rode into camp. General Whiteside was in command and it was soon learned that, as Walt had said, the remainder of the force was coming up the river under the lead of General Atkinson. General Whiteside had previously been in command of frontier rangers and had earned the reputation of being a splendid Indian fighter.

"Any regulars with you?" inquired Walt of one of the men who had just arrived.

"No," replied the men, "we're all volunteers. General Atkinson is following with them. He has about four hundred regular infantry and some three hundred volunteer footmen. He is coming up the river by boat with cannon, provision and most of the baggage."

"When did they start?" asked Robert.

"Three days ago; the same time we did."

"From Fort Armstrong?" Robert inquired.

"Yes," said the soldier. "The people on the river are having a bad time of it, too, I'm afraid. The water is very high and it will be hard work to make their way against the current. There are so many rapids, too."

"Did you find the traveling bad?" Walt asked.

"Yes, quite bad. We came slowly, too, and

made a stop at the Prophet's town as well. It was absolutely deserted."

"Who is the Prophet?" questioned Robert.

"His name is Wabokieshiek," explained Walt. "He is the man who has been urging Black Hawk on all this time. You know all Indians are superstitious and these medicine men and prophets exert great influence."

"The Prophet has been encouraging Black Hawk to make war you mean?" inquired Joseph.

"Yes," Walt answered, "that's just what he has been doing. As I understand it he has promised Black Hawk large reinforcements from the Winnebagos, Pottowattomies and Kickapoos and that when he has all their help he will surely beat the whites."

"The Prophet probably lied," Robert exclaimed.

"Of course he did," agreed Walt. "I don't think that those other tribes will help the Sacs one bit. Certainly they won't if they learn how many men we have here."

"I know one Pottowattomie who won't join him anyway," said Robert.

"Who is that?"

"Deerfoot."

"By the way, where is he?" exclaimed Joseph suddenly. "I haven't seen him in a long time."

"Perhaps he has already joined Black Hawk," said Walt, and he laughed in an insinuating manner as he spoke.

"Don't you say that!" cried Joseph hotly. "Deerfoot is the best friend that Bob and I have left on earth and I don't want him slandered."

"No, sir!' chimed in Robert. "If ever there was a man more faithful than Deerfoot, I've never seen him or heard of him. You may take our word for it that he can always be counted on."

"He certainly has two loyal supporters all right," laughed Walt. "If you boys are so sure he's all right, I guess I'll have to believe you."

"You'd better," exclaimed Joseph. "Now let's go look for him," he added.

Their soldier friend had disappeared. His horse needed care and he had gone to report at headquarters and receive his orders. General Whiteside's division had but a scanty store of supplies and were forced to depend upon those which had been collected at Dixon's Ferry.

Fortunately they were believed to be fully adequate.

"There is a lot of feeling among our men about joining General Whiteside, you know," said Walt as the three volunteers walked along.

"You mean among those who were here before he arrived?" Joseph asked.

"Yes, I don't care much about it either. We want to fight in our own way, and, personally, I don't see why we should be tied down to the regular levies. I had hoped we'd go on without them."

"We could act as scouts or rangers," Robert suggested.

"That's just my idea," Walt exclaimed. "We could push on ahead and see what is going on and act independently of the others. There are three hundred and more of us and that seems to me to be enough."

"We'll hear something soon anyway, I guess," said Joseph.

"I think so," agreed Walt. "I must leave you for a while now," he added. "I'll drop around to your tent a little later."

The two brothers continued on their way. It was an interesting and exciting experience

for them to see and feel the bustle and hustle of a military camp and to know that they were part of it. Horses were tethered under all the trees, tents sprang up on all sides as if by magic, while everywhere men were busy with the thousand and one duties of camp life.

Soon the boys came to their own tent and entered. Deerfoot, however, was not there and this fact caused the brothers no little worry.

"Where do you suppose he is?" said Joseph anxiously.

"I wish I knew," replied Robert. "I don't see how anything could happen to him right here in camp though."

"Unless there are a lot more people like Walt who think all Indians are bad. Most of these men do think that, too, I'm afraid. Perhaps if they saw Deerfoot roving around here they might lock him up or something. Someone is almost sure to insult him."

"That's true," said Robert. "Suppose we go out and look for him. He may be in trouble and need help."

They stepped outside the tent, and immediately their gaze fell upon a sight that not only allayed their fears but made them almost dance

with delight. Deerfoot was approaching the tent, astride the back of one horse, while he was leading two others by their bridles. He rode beautifully and seemed almost a part of his mount as he cantered up to the place where the two brothers were standing.

"Where did you get the horses?" cried Joseph as Deerfoot pulled up his mount and came to a stop in front of the tent.

"Major Stillman," said the Indian.

"He gave them to you?" exclaimed Robert.

"One for each," replied Deerfoot.

"Say," cried Robert excitedly, "that is what I call pretty fine! Where are the saddles though, Deerfoot?"

"No more saddles," he answered. "Me lucky to get horses."

"I should say so," said Joseph. "What do you want of a saddle anyway? You might think you didn't know how to ride a horse the way you talk. We have bridles and a blanket. Isn't that enough?"

"It is for me. I was just asking on your account," and Robert winked at Deerfoot as he spoke. Horsemanship was a part of the education the boys had acquired from their Indian

teacher and was a lesson they had learned as well as they had the others he had taught them. That was saying a great deal, too, for Deerfoot was a master who insisted that his pupils should always learn their lessons well.

"As though I couldn't beat you riding any time!" retorted Joseph hotly. "I leave it to Deerfoot to decide which is the better rider."

The question was not settled, however, for at this moment Walt come riding up to the place where they were standing in front of their tent.

"Those your horses?" he asked.

"Yes," said Joseph. "Deerfoot got them for us from Major Stillman."

"Good for him," exclaimed Walt heartily. "I tried to get some from him myself, but he said he had no more horses. Deerfoot must have influence with the major."

"Me get last t'ree horses," announced Deerfoot.

"That's fine!' said Walt heartily. "You'll all need horses and need them soon, too."

"What do you mean by soon?" Robert asked curiously.

"Tomorrow morning."

"What!" exclaimed the two young soldiers in one breath.

"We start after Black Hawk the first thing tomorrow," said Walt, smiling at the effect of his announcement.

Deerfoot made no sign and the expression of his face remained the same, but into his eyes crept a light that showed he, too, was glad to be on the trail of Black Hawk. Unconsciously his hand fingered the knife in his belt.

"Tell us about it," urged Joseph. "Who is going and how does it happen that we start before General Atkinson arrives?"

"Only the ones who were here before General Whiteside arrived are to go," Walt explained. "That means us, of course. Major Stillman is to be in command and we are to act as a scouting party."

"Someone must have overheard what we said this afternoon," laughed Joseph.

"Seems so, doesn't it?" Walt agreed. "Anyhow we're going and I must say nothing has pleased me so much in a long while. We're off at last and we won't have all those others bother us and interfere with our plans. I feel just as if I was starting on a big lark."

"Tomorrow's the thirteenth, isn't it?" inquired Robert solemnly.

"So it is," laughed Walt. "Don't worry about that though. I'm not superstitious and you needn't be, either. No harm will come to us on this trip and the only results of it will be a lot of fun for us and a few less braves for Black Hawk."

"I hope you're right," said Robert. "I've always had a queer feeling about the thirteenth though. I wish we weren't going until the day after tomorrow or were going to start tonight."

"That's what would just suit me," exclaimed Walt. "I'd like to start tonight, all right. We won't find Black Hawk tomorrow probably so there will be no fighting on the thirteenth anyway, and that will kill all the bad luck you're afraid of."

"No, it won't," protested Robert. "The point is that we start on the thirteenth. That is what counts."

"Well, I wouldn't let it worry me," laughed Walt. "I must be off now," he added. "I'll see you at daylight tomorrow."

He slapped his horse on its flank and galloped away. Robert and Joseph drew lots as to

which should have first choice of horses. Joseph won and made his selection, if such a thing was possible. The horses were both splendid animals and apparently there was little to choose between them. At any rate, both boys were very well satisfied with their mounts.

Darkness was now coming on and dinner time drew near. While the meal was being prepared the boys watered and fed their new mounts. Then they rubbed them down and tethered them for the night. This done, they quickly turned their attention to the food which Deerfoot had prepared.

"It will seem good to be the one doing the chasing for a while, won't it?" remarked Joseph when their meal was over. "I was getting sort of tired of running away all the time and I'll be glad to see someone else run for a change."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Robert heartily. "And when we get astride those horses whoever gets away from us will have to be pretty fast."

"The Indians will be mounted too, won't they, Deerfoot?" inquired Joseph of their comrade.

"All ride," grunted Deerfoot. "Good horses, too."

"That's all right," said Robert confidently. "They won't be as good as ours and we'll catch them all right."

For some time they sat and discussed what was to happen on the morrow, and then they prepared to turn in. A short time later they were sound asleep, and, strange to say, both boys dreamed of desperate encounters with Black Hawk and his band. None of the struggles ever came to a definite end, however, and if such things were really to happen the next few days would have to disclose the result of these combats.

CHAPTER X

ON THE MARCH

TIME to start, Bob!"

The first faint streaks of light were illuminating the eastern sky as Joseph shook his brother and roused him from his slumbers.

"All ready," cried Robert, wide awake at once. Life in the woods and on the prairies teaches one to waste little time either in going to sleep or in getting up in the morning.

"Deerfoot is looking after the horses," said Joseph. "As soon as we have washed we'll be ready for a bite of breakfast and then we must join the others. They'll start soon, I think."

Many of their comrades fell in with the two boys as they made their way down to the bank of the stream. There was much laughter and much splashing and puffing as the men drove the last cobwebs of sleep from their brains.

Everyone was in high spirits. They all seemed to look upon the affair in the nature of a great picnic, instead of actual warfare.

The two brothers could not help being affected by the hilarity. Robert was especially susceptible. He was more impulsive than Joseph and was readily swayed by his ever changing moods. One moment he was discouraged and gloomy and then a few moments later all his troubles were forgotten and his spirits rose accordingly.

"Isn't this fun, Joe?" he exclaimed enthusiastically, as they stood on the shore and watched the antics of their comrades.

"It is now," agreed Joseph, who was of a quieter and more conservative nature. "But how long it will continue to be fun, I don't know."

"Don't be so discouraged," laughed Robert.

"I'm not discouraged," said Joseph quietly. "I can't help but think though that some of these men take this affair too lightly."

"Not at all," Robert persisted. "Get into the spirit of the thing and forget your troubles for a while."

"I thought you were worrying about this

being the thirteenth of the month," observed Joseph, a half smile on his lips.

"That's so," exclaimed Robert suddenly. "I had forgotten all about that for a moment," and immediately his high spirits departed and he became quiet and thoughtful. "Let's go back to the tent," he urged a moment later, and all the way back he was silent and was evidently troubled.

Joseph said nothing, but he was secretly amused at the sudden change in his younger brother. He had seen just such sudden transformations in him before, however, and he knew that at any moment the pendulum might swing back and Robert become cheerful again.

"Dinner ready," announced Deerfoot, as they came to the tent. The Indian called every meal dinner, no matter what time of day it happened to be.

"All right, Deerfoot," exclaimed Robert, his spirits reviving already at the sight of food. "We are ready, too."

No time was lost in disposing of the meal the Pottowattomie had cooked and well it was that there was no delay, for hardly had they finished when the bugle sounded. Joseph and

Robert quickly grasped their rifles and after assuring themselves that the guns were in proper order and that their supply of ammunition was sufficient, sprang upon the backs of their horses. The animals had been used but little recently and as a result of their good care they were in fine fettle. It was some moments before the two young volunteers could calm down their mounts sufficiently to enable them to join the others.

Finally, however, they succeeded in obtaining control of the beasts and in company with Deerfoot cantered to the place where the men were forming. Nearly three hundred and fifty there were all together and the command to advance was soon given. Major Stillman was at their head and they trotted out of Dixon's Ferry spurred on by the cheers of General Whiteside's men who were left behind.

Walt had now joined his two young friends and their Indian ally. He rode side by side with them and laughed and joked continually.

"Good-bye," he called gaily to an acquaintance, who stood nearby. "Sorry you aren't going with us."

"You're lucky dogs," was the man's only comment on Walt's remark.

"That's the way I feel about it myself," exclaimed Walt to his companions. "We're going out to have some fun and those poor fellows have to stay at home. We'll probably finish the whole business up and not give them a chance to do anything."

"It's the thirteenth today, don't forget that," warned Robert.

Walt only laughed and soon dropped behind to chat with some friend of his in the company. The advance was most disorderly. No regular formation was attempted and the men were soon scattered and spread over a considerable space. The only apparent plan seemed to be to follow the course of the Rock River and this was done, each man practically acting upon his own responsibility. They proceeded leisurely, Major Stillman apparently being in no hurry. A stop was made for dinner in the middle of the day and that night camp was pitched in a grove of oak trees not far from the bank of the river.

Fires were soon burning brightly and the smell of food cooking reminded every one just how hungry he was. A day on horseback pro-

duced a hearty appetite and full justice was done to the meal. Many of these backwoodsmen were excellent cooks too. They were in the habit of often preparing their own meals and had really become expert in the art of plain cooking.

"This is what I like!" exclaimed Robert when the meal was over and they were seated about the camp fire. At this particular blaze were eight or ten men gathered and many similar groups were to be seen on all sides of them. The men were rough and hearty frontiersmen and it was a great treat to the two brothers to listen to some of the tales that were told of hunting and fishing adventures.

"So you like this, do you, Red?" said one of the men.

"You mean me?" demanded Robert quickly.

"I should say I did," laughed the man, a big, burly trapper. "I never saw any hair redder'n yours in my life."

Everyone present laughed at this remark, much to Robert's displeasure. What irritated him most of all, however, was the fact that his brother laughed much louder than anyone else.

"Look here!" said Robert angrily. "You'd

better not laugh at me. If I had hair the color of yours I think I'd keep pretty quiet. I'd rather have red hair than tow-colored."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Joseph, still laughing at the allusion to his brother's hair. "Mine suits me first rate."

"You're easily pleased," muttered Robert, but no one heard him.

"It's too bad Deerfoot hasn't blue hair," said the man who had begun the conversation. "Then we'd have the American colors, red, white and blue. We could put these three up in front for a flag."

Fresh laughter broke out at this remark and both boys joined in it now. Everything was said in a spirit of fun, and Robert was quick to realize how silly it was to lose his temper. It is no fun to tease a man who laughs at your teasing.

"Let's stop talking about hair and hear something about pelts," said Walt. "Tell us how you got those three panther skins I saw down at your cabin last month."

He addressed his remarks to the man who had called Robert "Red." This trapper was evidently a great favorite with the men and

one whom they looked up to and respected. His name was John Mason and he had originally come from Massachusetts. That is, he had left that part of the country when he was only five years old, and had migrated west with his parents. They had settled in Wisconsin and there he had learned the business of trapping and had followed it ever since he had been old enough to engage in it.

"Did I tell you the experience my father had?" inquired Mason. "How he was lost in the woods soon after we came west?"

"Not that I remember," Walt replied, and the others seated about the fire shook their heads in token that they had never heard the tale either.

"Well," began Mason, "it was soon after we had arrived from the East. Of course I don't remember it very well, but I've often heard my father relate the story. It seems we had arrived at our future home in the summer time; my father and mother, myself and my father's dog, a noble and intelligent animal he called Robin, because when he was a puppy he had once caught a young bird of that species. We settled down near the bank of a small stream

and my father set to work clearing a space in the forest for us, and in building a house for us to live in.

"It was no easy task for one man, equipped only with an axe, to level much of the forest round about, and in addition to that we had a home to build. My mother could help some, however, and together they finally erected a cabin. It was small, but it was snug and promised good shelter against the blasts of winter. It took some time to do all this though, and cold weather was at hand by the time the cabin was completed and a fair-sized space had been cleared.

"Winter approached and we had a home, and the beginnings of a farm. It had taken a good many weeks to acquire these things, however, and my father had had time for little else. Consequently our store of meat for the long, cold months was very low. Father had had little chance to hunt. He set out one morning, his gun over his shoulder, Robin at his heels and a small supply of jerked venison in his game bag. He was in hopes of bagging a buck, which would feed us for a long time.

"Several miles he walked through the forest.

Usually game abounded in this region, undisturbed except by an occasional Indian hunter. This time, however, father saw nothing except a flock of wild turkeys which flew away before he could get a shot. All the morning and into the afternoon he tramped through the woods and over the hills. Along toward the middle of the afternoon he suddenly spied a large stag. Ordering Robin to follow 'at heel' he crept cautiously along in an attempt to get a good shot at the deer.

"Just before he came within range, however, the buck suddenly took fright and bounded away. My father followed his trail eagerly, mile after mile. Night was almost at hand when he discovered his game standing on a large rock, his figure clearly outlined against the sky. Closer and closer father crept and finally raised his gun and fired. The deer leaped high into the air as the shot rang out and fell to the earth dead. Father ran forward joyfully and a few moments later had the buck on his back and was headed for home.

"For the first time he noticed that snow had begun to fall. It was the first snow of the winter and soon covered the ground and the

branches of the nearby trees. Father had traveled many miles that day and now was far from home. He knew the country only slightly and now that the snow was on the ground it was hard to recognize landmarks. Things look vastly different in winter from what they do in summer and father had never seen this part of the country in its winter coat. Meanwhile, the storm constantly increased in fury.

"On and on father plodded. The stag was across his shoulder and Robin followed whimpering at his heels. Father was worried now; he was fast tiring and he felt more sure every moment that he had lost his way. Night now covered the land and the snow drifted in like some great white robe. It was bitterly cold, and constantly growing colder. The thought of his wife and boy was all that kept him going. His strength was fast waning, however, and he finally succumbed to the irresistible desire he felt to lie down in the snow and go to sleep. He dropped his burden and fell forward, almost too weak to move."

"Did he die?" demanded Walt as the story teller stopped speaking.

"No, indeed," replied Mason. "Here comes

the remarkable part of the story. When father sank to the ground Robin immediately started for home. How he knew where it was and how to get there I never could see. At any rate my mother heard him whine and scratch at the door. It was after midnight and she was nearly distracted by fear and anxiety. She could easily see by Robin's actions that he wished her to follow him, and putting on a great fur coat she went quickly out into the blinding storm.

"Urged on by Robin's eagerness to have her hurry she floundered and ploughed her way through the drifts until she came to the place where father was lying. He was unconscious when she reached him. My mother was a large woman and very strong for one of her sex. Lucky for all of us that she was, too, for it was necessary for her practically to carry my father all the way back to the cabin, nearly a half-mile. You see, father had almost reached home himself though he hadn't known it. Well, she finally got him there and after hours of hard work revived him. For many days he lay sick, but with mother's constant care he finally recovered entirely. He also fetched the stag

home when he became able to go out. There it had lain covered deep in the snow, frozen stiff and as sound as ever.

"I just told this little story," concluded Mason, "to show you how hard some of us worked for our homes. Now that we have them we don't want the Indians to take them away from us."

A cheer greeted this remark. These men were always willing to applaud anything that meant trouble for the Indians.

"That was a good story, Mason," remarked Walt a moment later. "It shows you had a wonderful mother, doesn't it?"

"It does indeed," agreed Mason. "It shows father had a wonderful dog, too. Without him my mother would never have had the chance to do what she did."

"Quite right," exclaimed Walt heartily and murmurs of approval were heard on all sides.

"Yes, sir," continued Mason. "My father loved old Robin almost as much as he did me. I love dogs myself and I wouldn't be without one for anything. Some men are bad and some are good, but I tell you all dogs are good. You can believe everything they tell you."

"Gracious, I've talked a lot tonight," he added laughingly. "I'm going to stop now though and turn in. Tomorrow may be a hard day. Good night, Red, and everybody else," he called as he disappeared into the darkness.

CHAPTER XI

THE FLAG OF TRUCE

AT the first sign of dawn the forces were once more on the march. The men had a quieter and sterner air than they had manifested the preceding day. The prevailing opinion was that before the sun set that night they would come in contact with their foes, and in spite of the open assertions of the men that it was all a "picnic," this fact made them more serious.

The country consisted of open, rolling prairies, frequent groves of trees and occasional swamps. The men rode along in a careless manner, chatting with one another and boasting of what they would do to the hostile Sacs when they met them. Progress was slow on account of the disorderly march of the volunteers and it was late afternoon before they

reached the vicinity of Sycamore Creek where they intended to camp. This place was hardly more than thirty miles distant from Dixon's Ferry.

"We're going to pitch camp there," said Walt to Joseph and Robert, at the same time indicating a small clump of open timber some distance ahead of them.

"That looks like a good place," remarked Joseph approvingly.

"It is," agreed Walt. "You see it is entirely surrounded by open prairie and anyone who tries to attack us there will be completely exposed while we will have the protection of the trees."

"Do you think Black Hawk would dare attack us?" demanded Robert.

"I don't know," said Walt in reply. "It all depends on how many men he has. I doubt if he'd try such a thing though."

"Where is he now?" inquired Robert, somewhat alarmed by the prospect Walt had intimated.

"Somewhere near here, I think," replied Walt. "He is supposed to be on the other side of Sycamore Creek with the Pottowattomies,

trying to get them to join him in his war. You'd better watch your friend Deerfoot, too," he added in a low voice.

Robert's face flushed almost as red as his hair at this remark. "Don't you ever dare say a thing like that again!" he exclaimed hotly. "If you do, I'll refuse to be responsible for what happens to you."

"And I'll help you, Bob," said his brother quietly. "Now look here, Walt," he continued. "Bob and I like you very much and all that. We don't mind your fooling, but we do mind your remarks about our friend. We told you that once before and this time we mean it."

Walt looked in surprise at the two brothers. That they were in deadly earnest there could be no doubt. Robert was so angry that he could scarcely talk; he merely puffed and gasped with rage. His face was red and Joseph's was white, but it was a question which one was more angry.

"Whew!" whistled Walt in astonishment at this outburst. He saw, however, that if he continued his remarks he might be subjected to physical violence and he wisely refrained from saying more. He quickly changed the subject.

"Well, we'll be making camp in a moment," he said lightly.

"I'm glad of it," remarked Joseph. "My horse is tired and so am I. He hasn't been used much lately, I guess, and is soft." He was willing to forget the recent unpleasantness and be friends again, but Robert was not so easily pacified. His face was still flushed and he rode forward in silence. Joseph glanced at him and smiled. He admired his brother's courage and he also knew that his anger would soon disappear. Robert was one who never let the sun go down upon his wrath, simply because he could not stay angry for that length of time.

Soon they arrived at their destination. The men quickly dismounted and after tethering their horses, they busied themselves with preparations for making camp. Meanwhile, guards were stationed all around the grove to watch for possible signs of the enemy. The men's good spirits had now returned and they laughed and joked as they idled about or worked on their shelters for the night.

"It looks like a great big picnic ground here," remarked Joseph to Robert and Deer-

foot as they stood together and gazed about them.

"Too jolly," said Deerfoot grimly and he shook his head. He held Black Hawk in high esteem and was troubled by the evident carelessness of the white men.

"That's right, Deerfoot, they are too jolly," agreed Robert solemnly. "They forget that we started on the thirteenth."

"Oh, Bob—" began Joseph, when he was suddenly interrupted. A great hubbub and noise suddenly arose throughout the camp and the men rushed wildly hither and thither. All was confusion, as every man strove to get his horse and mount it.

"What is it? What is the trouble?" exclaimed Robert in alarm.

"Look there," directed Joseph.

On the crest of a hill nearly a mile away appeared three horsemen. That they were Indians was easily seen by their headdresses. One of them carried a flag.

"Who are they, do you suppose?" exclaimed Robert excitedly. He and Joseph and Deerfoot all ran for their horses, but they did not mount. They were waiting for orders, but the

other men were apparently mad with excitement, or at least many of them. Shouting and cursing, a large body of them dashed off across the prairie in the direction of the three Indians. Major Stillman and the other officers did their utmost to restrain their followers, but their efforts were useless. The rangers were not accustomed to discipline and obeying orders, and now they paid slight attention to the commands.

"We'll stay here," said Joseph. "We'll show Major Stillman that a few of us know enough to do as we're told, anyway."

"Who are those Indians, I want to know?" cried Robert.

"Black Hawk men," said Deerfoot.

"But what is that flag?" Robert persisted.

"White flag," explained the Indian, whose eyesight was far better than that of either of his young friends.

"Sure enough," exclaimed Joseph. "They're probably messengers from Black Hawk. They've got a flag of truce anyway."

"It doesn't look as if it was going to be respected though," said Robert. "Just see the way those men are rushing at the messengers."

"Walt was about the first to start, too. Did you notice that?"

"He'll get into trouble, I'm afraid."

"He didn't even have a saddle on his horse," said Joseph. "I noticed lots of the others that way, too. I never saw men in such a hurry."

As they stood and watched their companions bear down upon the messengers, grave fears arose in the hearts of the two brothers. They did not care for their Indian foes any more than did the other men, but they believed in playing the game fairly. They knew how high an Indian's sense of honor was and they feared for the result if these hot-headed rangers should do violence to Black Hawk's messengers. Long association with Deerfoot had taught them that an Indian never forgets an injury done him any more than he does a kindness.

Meanwhile, the mob of riders had swooped down upon the astonished messengers. Surrounding the three Indians they shouted and waved their arms and urged the braves on until they came into camp. Here more of the volunteers swarmed around the envoys, and yells and imprecations sounded on all sides. Major Stillman did his utmost to put an end to the

confusion and to quiet the hubbub. Standing in the center of the howling mob of men he tried to speak. The three Indians sat on their ponies at a loss to account for this demonstration and evidently were worried as to their own safety.

"My men," began Major Stillman, "these three messengers have come to us under a flag of truce. It is one of the rules of warfare that any bearer of a white flag is to be treated with respect. So far——"

The report of a rifle suddenly rang out, cutting short the words of the speaker. One of the Indians pitched forward on his horse. He clutched convulsively at the bridle in an effort to save himself, but his attempt was of no avail. The horse plunged and reared, and the rider, slipping from his place, fell to the ground, dead. Some one of the volunteers had treacherously murdered one of the messengers.

Immediately pandemonium broke loose. Confusion reigned before, but it was nothing compared to the din that now arose. Men shouted and ran in all directions, horses reared and kicked, orders were given, but no one paid any attention to them. The men were stunned by

what had happened and by the time some semblance of order had been restored the two remaining messengers were seen galloping at full speed across the prairie in the direction from which they had come.

"There they go!" shouted Walt, who had been in the thick of things all this time. He quickly jumped for his horse, and, followed by several score of the rangers, immediately started in hot pursuit of the two fleeing Indians.

"Come on, Joe, we might as well go too," called Robert excitedly and a moment later the two brothers, closely followed by Deerfoot, were also speeding across the prairie after the excited horsemen.

Suddenly about twenty men disengaged themselves from the main body, and, urged on by the calls and shouts of several of their band, dashed off in another direction. Joseph and Robert were at a loss to understand this move until they gained the summit of a nearby knoll and spied five more Indians. Evidently they had been sent forward by Black Hawk to spy on the encampment and to see what treatment the messengers had received. One look had

been enough for them and they were now fleeing for their lives.

Close behind them sped their pursuers, shouting and firing their guns as fast as they were able. Even as the two young brothers caught sight of them, one of the spies threw up his hands and pitched headlong to the ground. The riderless horse followed its companions for a short distance and then stopped and began to crop the grass on the prairie.

A moment later another one of the Indians was brought down, while the three who were still left, kept on, and, thanks to the fleetness of their ponies, gradually outdistanced their pursuers.

"We'd better stick to the main body," exclaimed Joseph, and at his word they turned and followed the men who were still chasing the two remaining messengers. The Indians on fresh horses had left their pursuers far behind, but they still could be seen in the distance. Across the prairie in hot pursuit rushed Major Stillman's entire force, a motley, disorganized and very much excited throng.

CHAPTER XII

THE ROUT

JOSEPH, Robert, and Deerfoot by fast riding finally caught up with the advance guard of the volunteers. The men were in a frenzy of excitement and rushed forward pell mell with no other thought than to overtake the fleeing Indians. Sycamore Creek was ahead of them and this stream the escaping messengers had already crossed. Their horses could be seen scrambling up the opposite bank and a moment later they disappeared behind a heavy fringe of bushes.

With loud shouts the pursuers rushed forward. That there could be any possible danger to them Major Stillman's men did not seem to consider. Each man was intent on being the first to overtake the fleeing redmen. Deerfoot, however, knew the man they were dealing with

and was consequently more cautious. Mounted on an especially swift pony he outdistanced the rest of the force and was the first to reach Sycamore Creek. There he stopped and wheeling his pony held up his hand.

The whole force came to a stop. Deerfoot raised himself in his stirrups. "No go ahead now," he called in a loud voice. "I fear ambush."

His remarks were greeted with howls of derision. Shouts and jeers were flung at the Pottowattomie, and a few even went so far as to intimate that probably Deerfoot was in league with Black Hawk and was attempting to save his ally from destruction. At any rate, no one paid any attention to his words of warning. Once more the rangers spurred their horses forward.

"Come on, Joe," called Robert excitedly. "We mustn't be left out of this."

"Did you hear what Deerfoot said?"

"I know, but he's overcautious sometimes. Even if he is right we can't stay behind now. Major Stillman himself ordered the advance."

"No one seems to obey him very often,

though," remarked Joseph grimly. "At least they only do when they feel like it."

"Are you coming?"

"Of course I am," retorted Joseph as he urged his horse forward.

Some fifty or more of the rangers had already crossed the creek and the two young brothers were quick to follow. Into the water they plunged and a few moments later were safe on the other side of the stream. Nearly the whole force had now forded Sycamore Creek or were in the act of doing so. As soon as they had emerged from the water they hurried forward on their quest.

Joseph glanced at Deerfoot. The Indian evidently was anxious and fearful of what was in store for them. He clutched his tomahawk firmly in his right hand, while his eyes constantly searched the nearby bushes for possible signs of the enemy.

Nothing had happened so far, however, and Joseph began to think that perhaps his brother had been right when he said that Deerfoot was sometimes overcautious. The pace was swift now and at least two hundred yards had been covered since they had left the creek. The

spot seemed ideal for an ambush, but there was no sign of the hostile Sacs as yet. Joseph felt more confident each moment.

His confidence was shortlived, however. Just as the force of rangers came to a particularly dense growth of bushes and timber, a yell rent the air. A blood-curdling, ear-splitting war whoop sounded that from its volume apparently issued from hundreds, perhaps thousands of throats. Everyone of the rangers drew in his horse sharply and glanced about him in astonishment. The yells were continuous and seemed to increase in volume. But where did they come from? Not a sign of the enemy was to be seen.

Suddenly, however, the Indians appeared. Every tree and bush seemed to split open and belch forth a blood-thirsty, yelling savage with a tomahawk in his hand. All the warriors were on horses, and forward they charged at full speed. They had rifles as well, and from these they poured a deadly stream of bullets into the front ranks of the rangers.

The volunteers, however, made no resistance. Instantly they wheeled their horses and at full speed turned and fled for their lives.

It was now Black Hawk's opportunity to exult and to take his turn as the pursuer. Terror filled the hearts of Major Stillman's men, and in spite of the efforts of their commander to rally them, they made off as fast as their mounts could carry them.

The rout was complete. From behind came the exultant yells and shrieks of the Indians who were bending every effort to overtake and cut down their white foes. They were still a considerable distance behind, however, and fortunate it was for the volunteers that such was the case.

Joseph, Robert and Deerfoot, once side by side, were now separated and with no other choice they were obliged to flee with their comrades. The two young brothers had stood their ground when the Indians first charged and each had emptied his rifle at the onrushing warriors. No one else of their company, however, had seemed inclined to stay with them. Consequently, as it undoubtedly meant certain death for them to face their foes alone, they too turned their horses and joined in the mad flight. They did not even have time to see the effect of their bullets.

As Joseph bent low over his horses's back and urged the animal forward, a man white with terror came alongside and by reason of his swifter mount soon passed him. It was Walt. Even at such a time, Joseph could not repress a grim smile, as he saw the traces of fear written all over the man's face. Walt, the one who had boasted of his prowess and his ability to deal with the hostile Indians, was now running like a scared rabbit for safety. Joseph's smile changed to a snort of disgust.

A bullet whirred past his head. Just ahead of him a man crumpled up in his saddle and slid to the ground, a limp mass that but a few moments before had been a human being. Joseph shuddered involuntarily at the sight, but he could not stop. His thoughts were not for his own safety alone, however. He wondered what had become of Robert and of Deerfoot. He raised his head to look about him in an attempt to discover their whereabouts. A bullet struck his cap, tearing it from his head, and Joseph made no further effort to find his brother.

Ahead of him, on both sides and behind him was a confused mob of panic-stricken horsemen.

The blood-curdling yells of the Indians sounded constantly over the prairie, as the men sped onward in their attempt to escape a massacre. Into Sycamore Creek they plunged. Coming out on the other side they kept on in mad disorder, until they had reached the clump of trees where their camp was pitched. They did not stop there, however, nor did they seem to have any thought of checking their flight.

Every man in the expedition seemed intent on putting as much space as possible between himself and the yelling pursuers, who were now pressing them so closely.

"Fools," thought Joseph to himself, as they passed the camp. "Why don't they stop here? We could defend this place against ten times our number. With the trees for protection and the Indians still on the open prairie we could pick them off at our leisure."

No one else seemed to share Joseph's views, however, or if any one did he did not try to put the plan into execution. On they sped, becoming more scattered and more demoralized every moment. Many men had been killed and Joseph himself had seen several fall from their horses. As far as he could determine no one

tried to oppose the Indians either. A few shots had been fired at first, but since that time every man seemed to be more interested in the fleetness of his pony than he did in offering any resistance to the pursuers.

As some of the ponies were much swifter than others the volunteers were soon strung out in a long line over the prairie. To his dismay, Joseph suddenly noticed that man after man was passing him and leaving him behind. He could not be sure whether or not the shouts of the Indians sounded closer, but he was greatly alarmed to see himself being outdistanced by so many of his comrades.

His pursuers were not yelling as much as they had been. That they had not given up the chase, however, was manifest by the fact that above the pounding of the horses' hoofs could be heard the frequent bark of the rifles. Joseph knew that it would be a long time before the Indians would relinquish such an opportunity to avenge themselves upon their enemies, the Americans.

He could see that his pony was tiring fast and that his predicament would soon be desperate unless something speedily occurred to

aid him. It was only a question of time before his horse would break down under the strain and then the young pioneer's case would be almost hopeless. Joseph raised his head and glanced about him.

A short distance ahead, and a little to one side, he spied a ravine. A narrow gully, filled with bowlders and scrubby trees, appeared to Joseph's gaze and he quickly decided to enter it, for perhaps he might find a place of refuge. He turned his horse and plunged into the ravine.

As he urged his horse to a final effort his mind turned to Robert and Deerfoot. What had become of them? If they had been killed, or far worse, captured, Joseph would be left all alone in the world. A lump arose in his throat at the thought. This was no time for sentiment, however, and he quickly suppressed his feelings and devoted his whole attention to his own safety.

A short distance in advance of him he spied a thick clump of bushes. Toward these Joseph hurried and upon reaching the spot was overjoyed to find that they would afford a screen sufficient to hide him from the gaze of anyone

who should pass that way. On the other hand he could look out from his refuge and see all that was taking place around him.

He tethered his horse to one of the roots of a large tree, which had been torn from its place by some great wind. Making sure that in his hiding place he and his horse were well concealed, he crawled cautiously along the trunk of the fallen tree, until he reached a spot from which he could see the surrounding country.

Hardly had he been in his place a moment when he heard the clatter of hoofs and not fifty feet from him he spied five Indians riding past at full speed in pursuit of the flying volunteers.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHINNY OF A HORSE

CLOSE behind these Indians came five more and then a little squad of three. Next appeared one solitary brave, his war paint shining while he shouted at the top of his voice. Joseph shuddered as he saw these savages dash past him and involuntarily he drew back further on the tree trunk. He had no desire to be seen by any one of his bloodthirsty foes, especially at this time when they were so filled with confidence and their desire to kill.

"If I count the number of Indians who pass this way," thought Joseph, "I can tell just how many may return and in that way I can tell whether or not there are any between me and Dixon's Ferry. When I am sure that all have returned I can start out and take my time about getting back."

This seemed to Joseph an excellent plan and he proceeded to put it into execution. The only trouble was that he expected at least several hundred of Black Hawk's party to pass that way in their pursuit of Major Stillman's men, and undoubtedly it would take a long time before they would return. Then, too, there was always the chance that some might go back to their camp by a different route and thus escape his notice. At any rate he decided to make an attempt at carrying out his scheme.

Thus far he had counted fourteen warriors. No more appeared for some time and Joseph began to wonder where the main body was. Certainly the fleeing volunteers had passed his hiding place, and if the Indians intended to overtake them they must follow the same course.

"Here they come," thought Joseph as once more he heard the clatter of hoofs on the prairie. Peering out cautiously he was surprised to see only four Indians in the party. He heard more approaching, however, and soon an additional band of six appeared. This last detachment was not riding as hard as the ones who had passed previously. They seemed to

be in no hurry and were apparently debating whether or not they should give up the pursuit of the rangers.

Suddenly Joseph heard a shout and saw the six warriors abruptly halt. They turned and awaited the approach of a solitary brave a hundred yards or more to their rear. When he came up to them, the seven Indians gathered in a circle and held a spirited discussion. Joseph fancied that the argument was as to whether they should push on or give up the chase and return to camp. Evidently his surmise was correct, for at the expiration of a few moments the entire band started back in the direction from which they had come.

"That makes twenty-five Indians I have counted altogether," thought Joseph. "I wonder what has happened to all the others who attacked us?"

Many minutes passed, however, and no more appeared. "Seven already returned," said Joseph to himself. "That makes eighteen more I must wait for. I hope they won't be long and that they won't discover me." The thought of what might happen to him, should his hiding place be found by any of the marauders, made

him shudder. He turned and glanced at his horse. The animal stood with drooping head, evidently thoroughly tired from its exertions. That he would soon be overtaken if it came to a question of speed was only too evident to the youthful frontiersman. It seemed to Joseph that hours elapsed before he heard any more hoofbeats on the prairie indicating that more of his enemies were returning. He was tired and it was all he could do to keep awake. Several times the young volunteer almost dropped off to sleep and the use of all his will power was required to shake off this feeling of drowsiness. Joseph knew that any such lapse might easily prove fatal to his chances of escaping.

Finally, however, he heard a noise and as he peered out from his hiding place he discovered a band of ten Indians approaching. They trotted along in a careless manner, evidently confident that no danger was lurking near at hand. That this was the case was fully realized by Joseph who wondered what would befall him if he should shoot at any one of the band. From his station in the ravine he could easily have selected his man and found no difficulty in bringing him down. He might even kill two

or possibly three of his foes, but he was largely outnumbered and it would only be a question of time before he must either be killed or taken prisoner.

"They'll never capture me alive," thought Joseph decidedly. He knew that in such a case his doom would be surely sealed and undoubtedly preceded by tortures that made his blood run cold even to think about. It was hard for him to restrain himself, however, as he watched his enemies jog past the place where he lay hidden. He fingered his rifle nervously and once or twice even raised it to his shoulder.

At length the Indians passed beyond his sight and Joseph settled himself to wait for the remaining eight. He was not kept in suspense long, for in a few moments six more rode by. They talked freely among themselves and were apparently discussing their victory. Gestures were frequently used in the course of their conversation, and everyone seemed to be trying to outdo the others in boasting of his conquest.

"Only two more," thought Joseph as this party disappeared. "I wish they'd hurry up and come, too." The young pioneer was greatly

puzzled to know what could have happened to the remainder of Black Hawk's band. He had been sure that the volunteers were attacked by at least several hundred warriors. Little by little, however, he began to change his ideas as he saw the few that had followed in pursuit of the white men. "Could it be possible," he thought, "that over three hundred white men had been put to flight by a mere handful of Indians?" He had counted twenty-five in all and he doubted if more than twice that number could have attacked them in the first place.

"What a disgrace," he thought. "We ran like a lot of cowards. The first shout scared us away and we didn't even stop to see how many there were against us." He became still more angry as he thought of the rout and when he recalled the look of fear on Walt's face a snort of disgust and contempt expressed his feelings in the matter.

Once more, however, his thoughts were interrupted by the sound of horses' hoofs. A moment later two Indians came within sight and Joseph heaved a sigh of relief as he realized that these were the last he was waiting for. In a few moments more he could mount his

horse and proceed to Dixon's Ferry and then he could discover what had befallen Robert and Deerfoot.

The Indians were now opposite Joseph's lookout. He remembered distinctly seeing these men pass before, for one of them rode a spotted pony, easily distinguished from all the others. As Joseph noted this fact, the pony in question suddenly thrust his head forward and whinnied. This in itself was not remarkable, but its consequences certainly were.

Joseph was horrified to hear from behind him the answering whinny of his own horse. That this desire for company on the part of his horse might easily have fatal results the young frontiersman knew only too well. His limbs were almost paralyzed as with wide eyes he watched his two foes to see if they had heard the sound. That they had done so was only too evident from their actions. They immediately wheeled their ponies and peered eagerly in the direction from which the unexpected sound had come.

Spellbound, Joseph watched them. Perhaps they might pass on after all, thinking their ears had deceived them. That there was but slight chance of this, however, he well knew, and for

a moment he thought his best plan would be to fire at them. On second thought he decided that the sound of the shots might summon help to the redskins and that was the last thing Joseph desired to happen.

Motionless, and with their guns ready for instant use, the two warriors sat and looked straight at Joseph's hiding place. He knew they could not see him from the place where they were stationed, and he hoped and prayed that they would not investigate. This hope was quickly dissipated, however, for suddenly his horse whinnied again. For a moment the young volunteer was so angry he could have shot the animal, but he knew that any such action would only spell ruin to his chances of escape. At any rate, the horse knew no better and was probably lonesome.

No sooner had the sound reached the ears of the waiting Indians than they raised their guns and fired. Two bullets came crashing through the bushes close to Joseph's head and he heard one of them flatten itself against a rock just behind him. Taking quick aim he fired his own rifle and saw one of the Indian's ponies drop to the ground. He waited for no

more, but jumping quickly upon the back of his horse he sped away down the ravine.

A hundred yards in advance of him the gully led out onto the open prairie. Soon Joseph emerged; his appearance was greeted by a yell of rage, and two bullets which whistled past his ears. Glancing behind him the young volunteer saw the Indian, whose horse had been shot, struggling to reload his gun, while the one that was mounted on the spotted pony was speeding forward in hot pursuit.

Joseph bent low over the neck of his horse and urged the animal to do its best. He had one bullet in his rifle and this he decided to use only when he could be reasonably sure of hitting his mark. Behind him he heard the war whoop of the pursuing redman, and this time Joseph knew that he was engaged in a race for life, such as he had never had before. The opportunities were more equal this time, but the Indian being behind had whatever advantage there was. "His life or mine," decided Joseph.

How long could his horse hold out? That was the question that most of all troubled the young pioneer. He realized how far and how

fast his mount had already traveled that day, and grave fears for the animal's endurance beset Joseph's mind.

Once more he glanced behind him. The Indian was gaining rapidly upon him. The spotted pony was evidently very fleet and the distance between the two racers was rapidly diminishing. Joseph's heart sank at the sight. He was tempted to turn and fire at his pursuer now. Nearly a hundred yards still separated them, however, and Joseph knew only too well that any chance of success at that distance was very slight. Dangerous as it was he decided to save his ammunition and run the risk of still being alive when a better opportunity should present itself.

On they sped, the horses' hoofs beating a sharp tattoo on the hard ground of the sun-baked prairie. The brush seemed to interfere with his horse's progress while the spotted pony which his pursuer rode ran easily and apparently was unhampered by any obstructions. "What a pony that is," thought Joseph. "If we could only trade mounts he'd never catch me. I could laugh at him and simply run away as I pleased."

A quick look about him showed Joseph that now scarcely more than fifty yards was between him and his enemy. "Why doesn't he shoot?" exclaimed the young volunteer out loud. "If he'd only fire and miss me I could stop and shoot him down before he has a chance to reload."

As if following Joseph's suggestion the Indian suddenly raised his gun and fired. The fleeing boy was crouching so low that he seemed almost a part of his horse's back. As he saw the redskin lift his gun to take aim he flattened himself out still further and held his breath as he waited for the result of the shot.

At last the time had come which was to decide his fate. As the sharp bark of the Indian's rifle sounded over the prairie Joseph felt a burning sensation in the fleshy part of his shoulder. He was wounded. It was his left shoulder, however, and so excited was the young volunteer that he scarcely felt the pain of the wound. He quickly stopped his horse and straightening up in the saddle lifted his gun to his shoulder.

The Indian seeing that he was tricked tried desperately to turn his pony. At the same time

he hurled his tomahawk, but the distance was too great and it fell short of its mark. Joseph pulled the trigger and immediately the Indian threw up his hands. For a moment he struggled convulsively to keep his seat, but it was of no avail. He fell to the ground, dead, a bullet through his temple.

Joseph was stunned for a moment, and then, realizing that he was safe once more, a great wave of joy swept over him. He felt no remorse at having killed this man, for by doing so his own life had been saved. Perhaps, too, this Indian was one of those who had massacred his family. The young volunteer dismounted and drew near to his fallen foe.

The young Indian was lying face down upon the ground. Joseph rolled him over and noticed at his belt two freshly taken scalps. Suddenly a great wave of horror rushed over the young frontiersman as he looked. One of the scalps at the Indian's belt was bright red.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SWALLOW

FOR a moment Joseph was too stunned to move. Shaking all over with anguish he stood still and looked at the bloodstained trophy fastened at the Indian's belt. The hair was exactly the color of Robert's, and Joseph felt sure that his brother had fallen a victim to this redskinned warrior. A great sob rose in the boy's throat and the tears welled up into his eyes, as he stood on the prairie and gazed at what he considered the proof of his brother's death.

"The only one left," thought Joseph. "My whole family wiped out by Black Hawk. Thank goodness, I am still here and I swear I'll have revenge." He clenched his fists and gritted his teeth as he thought of all he had suffered at the hands of the savages.

How long he stood in this place he did not know. It might have been seconds and it might have been hours, as far as he was concerned, for the young pioneer had lost all sense of time. He was completely wrapped up in his own thoughts. A coyote barked and at the sound Joseph raised his head. He looked about him, but the only sign of life he saw was the two ponies browsing quietly nearby.

"I'd better get out of here," exclaimed the young volunteer suddenly. "There's no telling how soon those other savages may be on my trail if that fellow whose horse I shot only gives the alarm." He started to remove the scalp from the Indian's belt, but suddenly drew back. "I can't! I can't touch it!" he moaned. He turned and walked toward the place where his horse was feeding. The animal raised its head and watched Joseph's approach, but made no effort to escape.

The young pioneer grasped the bridle and was about to climb into the saddle when a sudden idea struck him. "Why not take the other pony, too?" he thought. Surely it was a beautiful animal and much faster than any horse Joseph had seen among the volunteers. A

few moments later he was seated astride the spotted pony on his way to Dixon's Ferry. With one hand he led his own horse and at a good rate of speed jogged forward on his way.

His new mount had a remarkable gait, which Joseph could not help admiring. Joseph's heart was heavy and his spirits were low, but in spite of his sorrowful feelings, he did not fail to realize that the pony which had fallen into his hands was a prize. "The kind of a horse I've always wanted to own but never expected to," he thought.

Hour after hour he jogged across the prairie until at last he spied Dixon's Ferry in the distance. No sign of the enemy had appeared throughout the day, though Joseph had taken pains to search the horizon every few moments. The end of his journey was in sight, though this knowledge gave but little pleasure to the young volunteer. He kept wondering what he should do now that he was left alone, bereft of parents, sisters and brother.

Coming into Dixon's Ferry, Joseph met a large force as it was departing from the little settlement. General Whiteside was in command and the object of the expedition was to

bury the dead left on the battlefield by Major Stillman. General Atkinson had now arrived with his troops and Dixon's Ferry presented a busy scene. The fight of the previous day was the main topic of conversation and consternation and bewilderment had taken possession of the men.

Joseph rode quietly through the camp, searching eagerly for a familiar face. He did not arouse any particular comment as he came in with his two horses, for more than a thousand men were departing with General Whiteside at just that time and the young volunteer was overlooked in the crowd. Suddenly he spied Deerfoot, seated under a large tree smoking his long pipe. His back was toward Joseph, so that he approached close to the Indian without being seen.

"Deerfoot!" Joseph called, as he stopped his horses under the tree where the Pottowattomie was seated.

The Indian jumped to his feet as if he had been a jumping-jack. His pipe fell to the ground and broke into a thousand bits while he stared at Joseph with startled eyes. For once he forgot to mask his feelings.

"What's the matter?" demanded Joseph in amazement.

"Me thought you dead," said Deerfoot in an awestruck voice.

"Not at all. I'd just as lief be, though."

Deerfoot stared and stared at his young friend as if he could not believe his eyes. Finally he apparently convinced himself that it was no apparition that he saw, and his gaze shifted to the horse Joseph rode. Once more he started perceptibly. "Where you get that pony?" he demanded.

"I captured him."

"Where his rider?"

"He's dead."

"You shoot him?" asked Deerfoot.

"Yes."

"You not catch him when he ride that pony," said the Indian decidedly.

"No," said Joseph, "he caught me." He proceeded to tell Deerfoot of his encounter on the prairie and how he had finally shot his pursuer. "You act as though you had seen this pony before, Deerfoot," he added.

"Sure that The Swallow," said Deerfoot quietly.

"The Swallow?" repeated Joseph. "How does it happen that you know his name and recognized him when you saw him?"

"Everyone know that pony," replied Deerfoot.

"Why do they?" Joseph demanded.

"He fastest horse in country."

"What!" exclaimed the young frontiersman. "The fastest horse in the country, you say? What do you mean?"

"He called The Swallow," said Deerfoot. "He run as fast as swallow fly."

"Whew!" whistled Joseph in amazement. "It looks as though I had found a pretty good horse, doesn't it? Who owned him?"

"White Owl," replied Deerfoot. "He one of Black Hawk young men."

"Do you suppose it was White Owl I killed?"

"That so. He no let any other ride pony."

"Well," exclaimed Joseph bitterly, "I'm glad I killed him and got his horse. I'd give him back both if I could, if he'd only return what he took from me."

"What he take from you?" asked Deerfoot.

"I guess you know as well as I do," cried Joseph, his voice choking with emotion. "If

you'd seen the scalp he had, you'd know. If Robert isn't dead, why isn't he with you now?"

"Because he's been down taking a swim in Rock River," said a voice nearby, and turning around Joseph saw his brother standing not five feet distant from the spot where he and Deerfoot were talking. His teeth showed in a radiant smile, while his hair seemed redder than ever before.

"Bob!" exclaimed Joseph. "I thought you were dead."

"Far from it," laughed Robert. "I consider myself one of the liveliest people in camp."

"But I saw your scalp," protested Joseph.

"You see it now, you mean," said Robert. "It is right on the top of my head, just where it has always been."

"Why," said Joseph, "I killed an Indian out on the prairie who had two scalps at his belt. One of them had red hair, just the color of yours. I was sure you had been killed."

"Not I," laughed Robert. "Deerfoot and I wasted no time on the prairie. We were among the first to reach Dixon's. We were worried about you, though. When you didn't turn up we were almost sure you had been killed. What

have you been doing all this time and how did you escape?"

Joseph related his experiences again and then some moments were spent in admiring Joseph's new horse, The Swallow. "He is certainly a beauty!" exclaimed Robert enthusiastically. "I can easily see that everyone is going to be very jealous of you, Joe."

"Let them!" laughed Joseph. "They can do anything they want, but they can't take my pony and they can't catch him either."

Deerfoot again appeared at this moment, bringing some food for Joseph. When the young man's hunger had been appeased and the horses had been cared for, the three companions set out for a tour of the camp. Everywhere were little excited groups of men talking about the battle. Some of the men had not even returned to Dixon's Ferry, but had kept right on to their homes, having had enough of Indian warfare.

One gathering contained faces familiar to the boys and this one they joined. Walt was in the center doing most of the talking.

"Yes," he was saying, "just as I passed that ravine at least a hundred Indians came tearing

out at me. They were yelling like a pack of wolves and firing off their guns as fast as they could load them. I shot two of them, but they were too many and I finally decided to run for it. I have the satisfaction of knowing that I finished a couple of them anyway."

"Where was that ravine, Walt?" asked Joseph curiously.

"Hello, there, my boy!" exclaimed Walt, catching sight of Joseph. "Glad to see you back. We were afraid you had fallen by the wayside. Why, that ravine I was speaking of was near a clump of woods about a mile this side of where our camp was pitched."

"How many Indians did you say came out of there?"

"Why, about seventy-five or a hundred. What are you laughing at?" he demanded as a smile overspread Joseph's face.

"Nothing," replied Joseph quietly, "except this: I spent most of last night in that ravine you were describing."

"What if you did?" exclaimed Walt warmly. "That doesn't say a hundred or more Indians didn't charge out from there earlier, does it?"

"Well, I don't know," mused Joseph. "The

trouble with your story is this: I reached that gully before any of the Indians. I hid there all night and I counted every Indian that pursued our men. I counted them as they went out and I counted them again as they came back, just to make sure they had all returned."

"Do you insinuate that I am a liar?" cried Walt, half rising to his feet.

"I insinuate nothing," replied Joseph coolly. "I am merely stating facts."

Silence reigned in the little company. The men gathered there looked curiously from one to the other of the speakers. The situation was tense and for a moment it seemed as if there might be trouble.

"All right then," said Walt in response to Joseph's statement. "Tell us how many Indians you counted." The trapper's tone was contemptuous, for he had been piqued at the way the two brothers threatened him when he made remarks about Deerfoot and he still held his grudge.

"How many do you think there were?" Joseph demanded.

"Don't you know yourself? I thought you counted them."

"I did. I just wondered if you had any idea of the number."

"Well," said Walt, "I should say that at least five hundred attacked us originally. Probably not more than two-thirds of that number chased us very far. When we passed that ravine I was speaking of, there were about three hundred or three hundred and fifty."

Joseph laughed outright at this. "What's the joke?" demanded Walt hotly.

"Do you want to know just how many there were?"

"Of course we do."

"Well," said Joseph, "there were exactly twenty-five."

A howl of derision not only from Walt but from the whole company greeted this remark. The men looked at Joseph contemptuously.

"Your night out must have affected your head," said Walt sneeringly.

"Nothing of the kind," exclaimed Joseph warmly, and hot-headed Robert drew a bit closer to his brother in case there should be trouble. "I counted twenty-five and that's all there were. I don't believe there were over fifty opposed to us at any time."

"Poor boy! Poor boy," moaned Walt pityingly. "He's either out of his head or he never learned how to count."

"Look here," cried Joseph, thoroughly aroused. "I know what I'm talking about and I'm telling the truth, and that's more than you are. I saw you pass me and if ever a man was scared, you were. Your face was as white as chalk and you were running like a scared rabbit. And when you say you killed two Indians, you lie."

Walt sprang to his feet, his face livid. He struggled to reach Joseph, but was restrained by his companions. For some moments the excitement was intense and it was a puzzle as to how the difficulty would be settled.

"Look here," exclaimed one of the men. "One of these men is a liar, that's sure. Which one it is I can't say, though I'm inclined to think it is this boy here who says he counted only twenty-five Indians. Suppose we make him prove his statement."

"Can you do it?" whispered Robert in his brother's ear.

"No, of course not," said Joseph. "I have nothing but my word."

"We'll fight the whole gang, then," exclaimed Robert.

"I wouldn't believe that boy on oath now," cried Walt, still trying to wrench himself free from those who were holding him. "Next thing he'll be trying to tell us that he captured The Swallow from White Owl and brought him back to camp."

"That's just exactly what I did do," exclaimed Joseph.

CHAPTER XV

AN INVITATION

A ROAR went up from the assemblage at this remark of Joseph. The men laughed and whistled and hooted until the din was almost deafening. Through it all Joseph stood quietly, but with white face and clenched hands. Robert was for challenging everyone present to fight at once and it was with difficulty that he was restrained by his cooler headed brother.

Finally the noise somewhat subsided. The men ceased their jeering and turned to Joseph once more. Walt appointed himself spokesman.

"So you captured The Swallow, did you?" he said sneeringly.

"That's what I told you," replied Joseph quietly.

"Would you mind letting us look at him?"

asked Walt with pretended politeness. At the same time he winked at the others in the crowd.

"Certainly you may see him," agreed Joseph. "Suppose I do prove to you that I captured The Swallow. Will you believe my other story then?"

"We'll believe anything," laughed Walt, good-natured once more at the prospect of making sport of Joseph. Certainly he had thought that the boy was idly boasting about the horse or he never would have undertaken the risk he now was incurring.

"Come along, then," exclaimed Joseph, and with Robert and Deerfoot walking beside him, he started toward the place where the ponies were tethered. Walt became a bit uneasy now as he saw how ready Joseph was to carry out his suggestion. Perhaps he had captured The Swallow after all, and if so Walt fully understood that he would find himself in a very embarrassing position.

Robert and Joseph conversed eagerly as they went along. "I knew that when we started on the thirteenth of the month bad luck would follow us," exclaimed Robert. "Just see what has happened! We were defeated and disgraced

by a handful of Indians, and then you get mixed up in a quarrel and are called a liar and I don't know what else. I felt sure we ought not to have started on that day."

"Don't be silly, Bob," laughed Joseph. "We have had some hard luck, I'll admit, but we've had some good luck, too. At least I have. Just think of my capturing the most famous horse in this part of the country and now owning him all for myself."

"How can you be sure it is The Swallow?" demanded Robert.

"Deerfoot said it was."

"Perhaps he was mistaken."

"No mistaken," exclaimed Deerfoot. "That Swallow, sure."

"I hope so," said Joseph fervently. "I'm in for it if there has been any mistake."

They had now come within a short distance of the spot where the horses had been fastened. Joseph at once turned to face the crowd following him. Many more had collected by this time so that more than a hundred men were gathered together to see the result of the argument. Most of them favored Walt, if only for the reason that they had fled as eagerly as

he and they had no desire to be publicly acclaimed as cowards.

"Wait here a moment," exclaimed Joseph. "I'll go get The Swallow, and ride him out here for you to see."

"We can't wait more than two days," called Walt as Joseph made off. The crowd laughed at this remark, for Walt was considered a great wit.

"You didn't wait very long for Black Hawk to arrive the other day, either, did you, Walt?" shouted Robert, incensed at the treatment to which his brother was being subjected. The crowd also laughed at this and Walt's face once more flushed with rage.

"Did you wait yourself?" he cried angrily.

"Not I," replied Robert cheerily. "I came home just as fast as you did. The only difference is I admit it and you don't."

The crowd enjoyed this conversation tremendously and was hoping for more of it, but just at this moment Joseph appeared. As the spotted pony trotted into view from behind a clump of trees a murmur of admiration ran through the gathering. "That's him, all right!" exclaimed a raw-boned pioneer standing next

to Robert. Nods of affirmation were seen on all sides and exclamations of envy were heard as well.

Robert looked for Walt to see what he had to say now, but he looked in vain. Walt had disappeared. He had recognized The Swallow instantly, for he had often seen the famous pony and knew him well. Realizing that he was beaten he slipped quietly away in the crowd and hastened to his tent to be alone and unseen.

"Where's Walt?" cried Joseph, looking in vain for the trapper.

"He had an engagement, I guess," laughed one of the men, after a vain search had been made for the missing man. "Maybe we can find him though," suggested one of the others.

"Let him go," exclaimed Joseph. "All I want to know is whether this pony is The Swallow or not."

"He certainly is," cried the whole assemblage with one accord. They gathered about Joseph and his new mount, curiously inspecting this horse that had made itself so famous on the prairies. Everyone now was on Joseph's side and every man vied with one another in saying pleasant things. Even Robert was pacified and

he took great pride in the sudden fame which his brother had acquired.

"What'll you sell him for?" was the question frequently put to Joseph; but in answer, the young pioneer every time shook his head and merely smiled. "Money couldn't buy this horse from me," he exclaimed.

Supper time soon came and the gathering then scattered. The two brothers and Deerfoot were left to themselves, and the Indian was soon busily engaged in preparing the evening meal. When this was over, the three volunteers settled themselves around their fire and discussed all that had happened to them recently. They also talked of what might be in store for them in the approaching days, and wondered what their fortunes would be.

"What do you suppose our next move will be?" inquired Joseph.

"I heard this afternoon that we were to join General Whiteside's men in a few days," replied Robert. "He went out to the battlefield yesterday, you know, and is to push on after Black Hawk."

"What is General Atkinson to do?"

"He is the one that is going to join General

Whiteside. I supposed, of course, we would go with him."

"We stay here," said Deerfoot.

"What for? How do you know?" queried Robert.

"Stillman's men stay here, guard supplies."

"How did you find that out?" asked Joseph curiously.

"Me know, that's all," replied the Indian, and both boys were aware that further questioning was useless. They also were convinced, too, that Deerfoot was probably right. Seldom it was that he made any statement of which he was not absolutely sure.

"They'll leave us here because we disgraced ourselves, I suppose," exclaimed Robert bitterly. "I don't blame them either, but I tell you it makes me mad. I wish I could get just one more chance."

"Don't worry, Bob," urged Joseph. "You'll probably get another chance, all right. We'll all have to make up for the way we acted."

"Where do you think Black Hawk is now, Deerfoot?" exclaimed Robert impulsively. He half rose to his feet as though he intended to start in pursuit of his enemy that very moment.

"Sit down, Bob," laughed his brother. "You're not thinking of starting after him now, are you?"

"Just as soon as I can," said Robert eagerly. "Where is Black Hawk now?"

"He go north," replied Deerfoot. "Four lakes probably."

"Is that far from here?"

"Very far," said the Indian. "Much swamps, too."

"That's probably just what will happen, all right," agreed Joseph. "Black Hawk will go up into the swamps and hide there and then we'll have some fun driving him out again."

"Maybe he starve," suggested Deerfoot.

"Hasn't he any supplies?" asked Joseph.

"No think so. He not able to raise corn last year. He no get any now."

"That's very true," said Joseph. "Perhaps General Atkinson intends to starve him out."

"That's not my way, though," exclaimed Robert. "I'm for going right into the swamps or any other place where he may lead us. Finish it up and get it over with as soon as we can, is my idea."

"I don't know," argued the more cautious Jo-

seph. "Starving him out may take longer, but it is just as good a way in the end and we won't lose half as many men."

"Still," laughed Robert, "I don't suppose any of the officers are going to ask us for our opinion in the matter, so there isn't much use in our talking about it."

"You're right, Bob," agreed Joseph. "Who is this coming?" he exclaimed a moment later. Some man was making his way through the darkness toward their fire. It was impossible to see who it was and the prowler came all the way up to the fire without being recognized. It was then discovered that the visitor was Walt.

"I've come to apologize to you, Joseph," he said, after had had made himself known. "I acted badly this afternoon and I know it. I'm sorry and I want you to shake hands with me and forgive me if you can. Will you do it?"

"Of course I will," exclaimed Joseph at the same time putting forth his hand.

"I did lie," continued Walt. "I acted like a coward, too, and you showed me up for what I was. I was mad at you for doing it at the time, but I got to thinking it over and decided that I deserved it all. From now on I'm going to try

to make up for it, and I want your friendship and that of your brother, and Deerfoot's, too. Do you think I stand any chance of getting it?"

"You certainly do," said Robert heartily. This red-headed boy had a quick temper but he had also a correspondingly warm heart. He saw that Walt meant what he had said, and that was all that Robert needed. He shook hands warmly with the trapper. Deerfoot in silence also offered his hand.

"Now," said Walt. "I'm going to ask another favor of you three. I have been ordered to carry some dispatches for General Atkinson. He told me to select my own party and I want you three as members of it. Will you go?"

"Will we go!" exclaimed Robert. "Of course we'll go and the sooner the better. When do we start, Walt?"

"The first thing in the morning. Just sit down a minute and I'll tell you about it."

CHAPTER XVI

A SCOUTING PARTY

I CAN'T tell you much, for I don't know much about it, myself," Walt explained. "All the information I have are my orders. I am to carry some dispatches from General Atkinson to Fort Armstrong."

"That's all that is necessary for us to know," cried Robert enthusiastically. "How many are there to be in our party?"

"Ten. We four and six others."

"We'd better get ready then, I guess," suggested Joseph, who was always of a practical turn of mind. "How about food? Who is to look out for that?"

"I am," replied Walt. "The rest of you needn't worry about a single thing. Everything is ready and all you will have to do is to go along."

"That's fine!" exclaimed Robert. "Just the kind of an expedition I like. Not a blessed thing to worry about."

"Except Indians," Joseph cautioned him.

"Huh! Indians!" snorted Robert. "We aren't afraid of Indians! Are we, Deerfoot?" and he slapped that surprised brave heartily on the back.

"No afraid," replied Deerfoot seriously, looking in astonishment at his young friend. He never had become used to these outbursts of hilarity on Robert's part and he did not know just what to make of them.

"You're glad you're going, too, aren't you?" Robert insisted.

"Yes, me glad," answered Deerfoot, without changing the expression of his face or the tone of his voice.

"You're hopeless, Deerfoot," exclaimed Robert laughing. "You show about as much enthusiasm as a piece of rock."

"He doesn't believe in wasting his strength and breath perhaps," suggested Joseph. "When the time comes he'll be in the thick of things, though, you may be sure of that."

"I know it," said Robert. "When he does a

thing or says a thing he means it. That's more than I can say sometimes."

"We won't worry about you, I guess, Bob," laughed Walt. "I know who can be depended upon. That's the reason I asked you to go with us."

"And now I'm going to leave you," he added. "Don't forget tomorrow. We'll meet at the swimming hole at daybreak. Good night."

"Good night," replied Joseph, Robert and Deerfoot together, and a moment later Walt disappeared in the darkness.

"Where is Fort Armstrong?" demanded Robert, as they were preparing to turn in for the night.

"Why, Bob," chided his brother. "Don't you know where that is?"

"Of course I do," replied Robert. "That's just the reason I asked you."

"Well, it's right where the Rock River empties into the Mississippi," Joseph explained, paying no attention to his brother's attempt at sarcasm. "That is the place where General Atkinson and General Whiteside came from. They collected their troops there before they started up the Rock River."

"Then we're going back the way they came?"

"Exactly."

"But I'm afraid we'll miss something," protested Robert.

"Don't you want to go? A few minutes ago you said you did."

"I still do," exclaimed Robert quickly. "For a moment it seemed to me that we would be getting out of touch with things if we went back there, but I guess there's likely to be something going on, no matter where we are."

"Surely, there is," Joseph agreed. "I think that Black Hawk's victory will make it very unsafe for the settlers around here, too."

"That's so. Probably all the Indians will start out on the warpath now."

"Yes, and they'll be murdering all the settlers in the country," exclaimed Joseph. "Many more families will get the same treatment ours did, I'm afraid."

"Well, that's what you and I are here to stop, you know," said Robert.

"Perhaps if we stop talking and get some sleep we'll be in better shape to do it, too," Joseph suggested. "Look at Deerfoot. He's asleep already."

The two brothers also were soon fast asleep and knew nothing more until they felt their Indian friend shaking them and telling them to wake up. They were on their feet almost instantly and were soon ready to depart. The ponies were fed and watered, and in a short time they were all on their way to the meeting place on the river bank. It was scarcely light as yet and the first rays of the sun were just appearing when the young soldiers reached their destination.

Walt was already on hand, as also were two of the other members of the party. In a few moments the three remaining scouts appeared and a start was made at once.

The boys were very proud to be members of this expedition. A responsibility had been placed upon their shoulders and every man likes to feel that he is thought capable of sharing such a trust. Joseph was doubly proud. He sat astride The Swallow and felt himself the center of all eyes. The more he rode the pony the better he liked him, too. As Walt said, "The Swallow was everything that a horse should be."

They struck off across the prairie and following the course of the river as closely as

practicable they made their way steadily forward. Both Joseph and Robert were delighted to see among their number John Mason, the man who had first called Robert "Red," and had entertained them one night with a story of a hunting experience his father had had. The two brothers had formed a strong liking for this man. He was a splendid type of pioneer and commanded the respect of all who came in contact with him.

"Bad times ahead of us, boys," he exclaimed, bringing his horse alongside Robert's and addressing the two brothers.

"What's the matter now?" Robert demanded.

"Black Hawk has turned his war parties loose on the settlements."

"He did that long ago," said Joseph. "Bob and I know that from bitter experience."

"I know you do," exclaimed Mason. "I guess you have caught it as hard as anyone, but it's going to be worse than ever now. Since Black Hawk chased us away so easily, I guess he has become conceited and thinks that nothing can hold him back."

"That's what we said would happen," Joseph remarked.

"Well, it's true," continued Mason. "Several reports have come in already of people being murdered."

"Near here?" inquired Robert.

"Yes, quite near. Yesterday morning they killed a man just north of here. He was a minister and was on his way to Chicago. It seems he was in the habit of traveling around through the settlements in the course of his work. He was a queer looking old fellow, with a beard that was nearly a yard long. I remember him well, for he used to come around my part of the country as well as here. Two nights ago he stopped over night with a family who warned him that suspicious Indians were in the neighborhood. They all left the house and hurried off to safe places, but he stayed on. He said he wasn't afraid and that he didn't think the Indians would harm him anyway. So he stayed. One of the sons returned home the next morning to get something that had been forgotten, and found the poor old fellow scalped and his head almost severed from his body. Isn't that horrible?"

"I should say it is," agreed Joseph, shuddering at the thought.

"Where did you hear about it?" asked Robert.

"The son who returned home told me. He hurried right from there to Dixon's and wants to enlist. He says this business must stop."

"He is right about that!" Joseph agreed heartily. "Why, no one will be safe any more unless something is done. All the other tribes may be lured in, too, if they see the success Black Hawk is having."

"Very true," said Mason. "I believe that already some of the Winnebagos and Pottowattomies have joined him."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Robert. "I wonder if Deerfoot knows that some of his people are with Black Hawk now?"

"Of course he knows," said Joseph. "He seems to know everything almost before it happens. He is uncanny at times."

"Do you suppose it will make any difference to him?"

"Not a bit. Why, he'd choose you and me in preference to his own family, I think. He likes us better than anyone else in the world."

"He certainly is a good friend of yours, isn't he?" remarked Mason. "At any rate I believe

only a small band of his people are with Black Hawk. Some of the young bloods who like fighting, that's all."

"Indians love to fight, don't they?" said Robert. "I wonder why it is."

"Simply because it is born in them, I guess," laughed Mason. "All their lives they fight. If not with the whites, then with some other tribe."

"I feel sorry for them," Joseph remarked. "They certainly have had a hard time ever since the white people came into this country. Every year they are pushed farther and farther west. They see their homes being taken from them and I don't blame them if they don't like it."

"I suppose you felt sorry for them when they were murdering our family and burning our home," exclaimed Robert hotly.

"That's different," agreed Joseph. "At the same time I don't suppose they know any better and that is their way of making war."

"That doesn't excuse them, though," retorted Robert.

"Of course it doesn't," Joseph admitted. "I'm for getting even with them just as much as you are. Don't worry about that. And I

agree with you that the quicker we let them know that we won't stand for this sort of business the better it will be for all concerned."

"That's exactly the way I feel," said Mason. "Personally I have nothing against the Indians. There are good ones and there are bad ones, just as there are good and bad white men. This country has got to be safe for settlers to live in though, and I am going to do my best to help make it that way. As you say we must let the Indians know that we intend to put a stop to this wholesale murder and massacre."

The sun by this time was high in the heavens and a stop was made to refresh the horses and to give the men a short breathing spell. They halted in a clump of trees near the bank of the river. The men stretched themselves on the ground and completely relaxed. It was a peaceful scene and it would have been difficult for an observer to realize that danger lurked near at hand. One of the scouts stationed as a lookout soon testified to this fact, however.

When a half-hour had elapsed the march was resumed. The route still lay along the bank of the river, most of it over the open prairie. Occasionally they crossed a swamp or passed

through a clump of woods and at such times extreme caution was exercised. One man was sent ahead to spy out the land, while the others followed in single file, prepared for any emergency that might arise.

Thus far no sign of the enemy had been discovered, however. At the same time the scouts did not relax their caution for an instant. They were too familiar with the ways of the redmen to think themselves ever secure from an attack.

The day wore on and the shadows grew longer. Some of the horses began to show signs of fatigue, but not so The Swallow. He stepped as lightly as ever and apparently was as fresh as when he started. Joseph became more enthusiastic over his new pony every moment. The other horses were tired, however, and soon it was decided to stop for the night.

"There's a large swamp just ahead," explained Walt. "I think we ought to get through that before we pitch camp. On the other side is a long stretch of prairie and we should be safe from any surprise out there in the open."

Walt's suggestion was approved and soon the little party came to the swamp. It was particularly dense and of large extent. To ride

around it would have consumed much valuable time. Consequently they plunged into its fastnesses and urged their horses to make their best speed and reach the open country again as quickly as possible.

The party was strung out in a long line, with John Mason at the head. No one spoke and the only sound to be heard was the heavy breathing of the horses and the sucking of their hoofs as they pulled them out of the soft, wet earth.

Suddenly a rifle shot rang out through the still air and the band of scouts came to an abrupt halt.

CHAPTER XVII

A PERILOUS UNDERTAKING

EVERY man immediately dismounted. There was a rush for shelter and in a remarkably short space of time the whole band had placed themselves behind trees or clumps of bushes. Not one had abandoned his pony, however, for without a mount no man would stand much chance if it should come to a question of escape.

The shot had been fired at John Mason, who was in the lead, but he had escaped unharmed. Meanwhile, not a sound broke the stillness which rested over the swamp. Many moments elapsed and still no significant sound was heard. Joseph was standing behind a large oak tree, well screened by a heavy growth of bushes. He had quickly tied The Swallow to an overhanging bough and he hoped that no one of

the Indians would discover the presence of the pony.

Robert had taken his station in a position similar to Joseph's and about ten yards distant from him. The remainder of the band were placed at varying intervals over a space of nearly a hundred and twenty-five yards. Every man held his rifle ready for immediate use.

Joseph glanced eagerly about him. He could see his comrades crouching behind their shelters but no sign of the enemy appeared. It gave the young pioneer a queer feeling to see all these men hiding and yet not to know from what they were trying to conceal themselves.

He looked again at his brother. This was just the kind of situation to appeal to Robert and he was greatly enjoying himself. He loved adventure with a spice of real danger in it, and consequently was in high spirits. He caught Joseph's eye and smiled. Then he waved his hand at his brother. As he did so there came the sharp report of a rifle and a bullet clipped a piece of bark from the tree just above his head. Robert drew back hurriedly.

Instantly the white men's rifles spoke, all firing at the puff of smoke which disclosed the

position of the Indian sharpshooter. Whether or not any of the bullets reached their mark could not be seen, but this was the signal for a general fusillade. The redmen replied to this volley with a volley of their own and from that time on the firing became general on both sides. Above all the noise arose the frequent war whoops of the Indians, and both Robert and Joseph shuddered at the sound. They had heard it often before and every time it had been followed by misfortune.

Suddenly another war whoop sounded not thirty feet from the spot where Joseph was standing. At the sound he started violently and his gun almost fell from his shaking fingers. He turned in alarm to see whence the noise came, and to his intense relief discovered that Deerfoot was the cause of his fright. The Pottowattomie had flung his defiance back at his foes to show them that not all of his tribe were on the side of Black Hawk.

So interested was Joseph in watching his red ally that he nearly forgot that he was in a fight and that at least fifteen or twenty bloodthirsty Sacs were intent on taking his life.

At the conclusion of this war cry Deerfoot

immediately dropped to the ground and began to worm his way forward on his belly as fast as he could crawl. With fascinated gaze, Joseph watched the half-naked redman whose skin glistened with war paint as he cautiously, but steadily crawled onward across the swamp.

From behind a tree scarcely fifty yards distant one of the enemy had been firing. Evidently this brave was the goal Deerfoot had in mind. Joseph soon realized this and resolved to do all in his power to aid. As fast as he could load his gun he emptied it at the hidden Indian and did his best to keep his attention occupied so that Deerfoot might approach unnoticed. Deerfoot must have realized this, though, of course, he made no sign. Rifle in hand he still was crawling through the swamp. The grass was high, affording him excellent protection and he took great pains to keep every possible bush or stump or tree between him and the object of his quest.

Every little while Joseph lost sight of Deerfoot. It was difficult to follow the Pottowattomie's course as he went along, and so skillfully did Deerfoot perform his task that only the occasional waving of a clump of bushes gave

evidence that anyone was disturbing them. "That's a wonderful performance," thought Joseph, and he was right.

At length Joseph withdrew his gaze from Deerfoot's movements and looked around at the rest of his comrades. No one seemed to have been hit as yet, though Joseph could only account for eight of the ten members of the party. Robert was as cheerful as ever and presented a smiling though powder-smeared countenance to his brother's gaze.

"Why don't we charge them, Joe?" he called.

"That would be a foolhardy thing to do," replied Joseph. "What chance would we stand?"

"Some of us would survive," said Robert. "I wish they'd try it, anyway."

Joseph made no reply beyond a shake of the head and once more he turned his attention to Deerfoot. He was, however, now unable to locate the Pottowattomie. Having once taken his eyes from the path he was pursuing Joseph could not find it again. That Deerfoot must have approached close to his goal now, he felt confident, but still no sign of him appeared. The young pioneer riveted his gaze upon the tree that sheltered his enemy, hoping for an

opportunity for a favorable shot. He thought he saw a feather move behind the broad trunk, and immediately he fired.

An answering shot came almost instantly. Joseph could hear the bullet cut through the branches directly above him, and involuntarily he drew back farther behind his shelter. Scarcely had the report of the rifle died away when an unearthly yell rent the air. Then before Joseph's eyes was enacted an awful scene.

He saw Deerfoot suddenly spring to his feet, appearing as if by magic from the tall grass at the foot of the tree behind which his enemy was located. The shining, painted body of the Pottowattomie appeared like some strange monster in the half light of the coming night. His war cry echoed far out over the marsh, while in one hand he grasped his rifle, and in the other was his tomahawk. With one bound he flung himself upon his adversary.

Joseph could see the flash of Deerfoot's hatchet as it was raised to strike. He could almost feel the shock of the two men's bodies as they came together and then the struggle passed out of his range of vision. He hastily reloaded his gun and turned to Robert.

"Come on, Bob!" he cried. "We must help Deerfoot!"

"You can count on me," replied Robert quickly, and together the two boys started forward to the aid of their friend. It was a dangerous mission on which they were embarking, but neither boy gave any heed to his own peril. To help Deerfoot was their only thought and though they were not sure that their loyal friend was in need of aid, they were determined to be on hand in case such a need should arise.

"Keep low, Bob," warned Joseph.

"I'm as low as I can get now!" exclaimed Robert. "I'm almost bent double as it is."

"That's the way to be. Now hurry as fast as you can."

The two brothers darted forward, rifle in hand. Crouching low and running swiftly they hastened to Deerfoot's assistance.

"Come back!" shouted some one of their comrades in alarm as he saw what the two boys were attempting. No attention was paid to this bit of advice, however, and the boys merely increased their speed. A bullet scudded over their heads, and then another struck the ground just in front of them. On they went, however,

each boy fearful lest he should be too late in bringing aid to their faithful ally.

Nearer and nearer they approached to the tree behind which Deerfoot had disappeared. Thus far they had been untouched but it seemed almost a miracle. Every moment the rain of bullets about them increased and to their watching comrades it seemed as if they must be hit. Yells of defiance and rage greeted their appearance and apparently every one of the hostile party was now directing his fire at the two daring youths.

Half the distance had been covered by this time. Only a few seconds had elapsed but to the two brothers it seemed as if a long time had passed since they had left their shelter and started on their perilous adventure. No thought of retreat had entered either boy's mind, however, and even if they had had such a desire it was too late now to turn back.

Just ahead of them was a large fallen oak and toward this they made their way. Robert's sleeve was cut by a bullet and both boys had felt many of the leaden balls whiz by close to their ears. Still they kept on and soon came to the prostrate tree. Vines and creepers cov-

ered the trunk, providing an excellent screen, and behind this shelter the young volunteers stopped for a momentary breathing spell and a chance to get their bearings.

"Whew, Bob, this is ticklish business!" panted Joseph, and he and his brother instantly sank to the ground.

"I know it, Joe," replied Robert. "That doesn't make any difference, though. It has to be done."

"Of course it has," cried Joseph. "We are wasting valuable time here, too!" He once more sprang to his feet and after a hasty look about him started on his way again. Robert followed close behind. "Only a few yards more," he called encouragingly. "We'll make it all right, Joe."

Just at this moment when the two young pioneers appeared around the end of their shelter, they were once more exposed to full view. A yell greeted them, followed by a hail of lead. Bullets sang all about them and suddenly Joseph uttered a groan and plunged forward. He fell headlong to the ground and rolled over upon his back.

Robert was at his side in an instant. "Where

are you hit, Joe? Is it bad?" he cried. Joseph's red-headed and impulsive younger brother apparently entirely forgot that he, too, was exposed to the fire of all the Indian party. Not so, Joseph, however. Even at this time his first thought was for his brother, and he begged him to return.

"Go back, Bob," he pleaded. "You can't help me any now."

"Tell me where you're hit," demanded Robert.

"Right here," cried Joseph, holding on to his left leg with both hands. "It's just above the knee and I can't walk."

"I'll help you," offered Robert eagerly. "Lean on me and we can get back."

Joseph made an effort to get up, but it was unavailing. His leg gave out under the weight and he rolled back to his former position. Blood showed in a dark red spot above his knee.

"I can't do it, Bob," he moaned. "There's no use in your being hit, too, though. Please leave me. Save yourself, anyway."

Robert suddenly sprang to his feet. "All right, I will leave you," he cried, and at full speed he ran swiftly toward the tree behind which Deerfoot and his enemy were concealed.

CHAPTER XVIII

BETWEEN THE LINES

AS Robert ran forward he caught a fleeting glimpse of Deerfoot. He saw his Indian friend locked in a death struggle with his foe. Over and over upon the ground the two men rolled, sometimes one on top and sometimes the other. Neither had been able thus far to deal any decisive blow, and each one was doing his utmost to use his knife or tomahawk.

The sight spurred Robert forward, and a feeling of intense rage welled up into his heart. His family had been murdered and his home destroyed. His brother had been shot and now the last person to whom he could turn on earth was struggling for his life with one of these same enemies of his. All that had befallen him swept through Robert's mind in a flash. Red spots danced before his eyes and he was more

angry than he had ever been before in his life.

He was afraid to shoot, however, for fear he might hit Deerfoot. The two men were so entwined in each other's embrace that it was sometimes hard to distinguish one from the other. Neither one was aware of Robert's presence. It was not so with the other Indians, however. A hot fire was directed at the daring young pioneer and only the deadly shooting of his comrades saved him from a personal attack.

Robert dodged behind the tree for protection while he cautiously peered out. He was waiting his chance to step in and deal the blow that would return Deerfoot victor in the struggle. The two men were straining every nerve and every muscle in their effort to gain the mastery. The veins stood out upon their foreheads, while great beads of perspiration streamed from every pore. Their breath came in gasps and it seemed impossible that human strength could endure such a test much longer. Evidently the strugglers must soon weaken, and such proved to be the case.

The one that weakened first, however, was Deerfoot. His opponent had grasped him by

the throat and shut off his breath. With his breath gone Deerfoot's strength ebbed quickly. Little by little his resistance ceased until by a supreme effort his opponent gained the upper hand and in a short time he sat upon Deerfoot's chest, his hands still clutching the Pottowattomie's windpipe. Deerfoot's conqueror leered exultantly as he reached for his knife to complete his work.

This move, however, was Robert's cue to act and he responded at once. Grasping his rifle by the barrel with both hands the young volunteer stepped out from behind the tree. He moved noiselessly and so intent was his foe upon what he was doing that Robert's actions escaped unnoticed. He raised his gun and swinging it twice around brought it squarely down upon the shaved head of his enemy.

That was all. The Sac, without even so much as a groan, rolled over and lay still upon the ground. His knife slipped from his hand and not a muscle in his body quivered. He was dead.

"Come, Deerfoot!" cried Robert. "Come quickly!"

He grasped his friend by his hand and lifted

him to his feet. For a moment Deerfoot seemed dazed and he passed his hand over his throat.

"Come on! Come on!" urged Robert. "Joe is lying out here wounded, and we must look after him."

"Me come," replied Deerfoot huskily. He turned and looked at his fallen opponent, but Robert grasped his arm. He knew what was passing in his red ally's mind and he forestalled the impulse.

"No scalping now," he exclaimed. "We'll be killed if we stay here any longer. Please come, Deerfoot."

The bullets still sang about their heads. One struck Robert's gun, scarring the stock and tearing it almost from his grasp. Evidently there was no time to lose. He caught hold of Deerfoot's arm and half dragging him hurried his friend from the perilous place.

As they emerged from the shelter of the trees a shout of welcome from their comrades and a yell of rage from their enemies at the same time greeted them. The sound, however, scarcely made any impression upon the two daring men. So intent were they upon the task at

hand that nothing else seemed of any consequence to them.

"Bend low and follow me, Deerfoot," cried Robert, loosing his hold on the Pottowattomie's arm. He started quickly toward the spot where Joseph was lying and Deerfoot came close behind him. It was a new experience for Robert to be giving orders to his redskinned friend, but the young frontiersman enjoyed it none the less on that account. Deerfoot was rapidly regaining his strength and composure, however, and Robert's supremacy threatened to be short-lived.

Through the storm of leaden death they ran. A few seconds, which seemed like hours to the young pioneer-soldier, elapsed, and they arrived at the place where Joseph was lying.

"Take his head. I'll take his feet," cried Robert. Joseph made no objection and merely groaned as he was lifted from the ground and borne rapidly in the direction of his own forces and of safety.

"Stop here," ordered Robert sharply, as they came to the fallen log behind which he and his brother had taken refuge, a few moments before. They came to an abrupt halt and as ten-

derly as possible placed Joseph upon the ground.

"How do you feel, Joe?" asked Robert, bending anxiously over his brother.

"Pretty weak," replied Joseph in a husky voice. His face was white and drawn with pain, but his jaw was set and all his will power was being exerted.

"He bleed much," exclaimed Deerfoot. "Me fix him." He quickly tore a strip from his hunting shirt and fastened it around Joseph's leg, just above the wound. Exerting all his strength he then drew the bandage as tightly as he was able so that the blood would be held back and as little as possible should escape. Joseph seemed to be suffering more pain as time went on. The first shock of the bullet had stunned him so that his senses mostly were dulled to any feeling of physical suffering. Not so now, however, for try as he might he could not help giving evidence that he was in agony.

"That's better, Deerfoot," Robert remarked. "Do you think he is wounded badly?"

"No," replied Deerfoot shortly. "He bleed bad but not serious." He had slit Joseph's

trousers up the side so that the wound was exposed to view. The bullet had passed through the fleshy part of the leg, tearing an ugly hole, but it was easy to be seen that the trouble was not likely to be lasting.

"He's bled enough at any rate," exclaimed Robert grimly. "You look almost as though you had one red trouser leg, Joe. Is that the new style?"

"I don't know, Bob. I haven't looked at it," Joseph answered weakly. Much of his strength had ebbed away with his blood, though the flow had been largely checked by Deerfoot's treatment. The Indian was now engaged in bandaging the wound itself. His idea was to fix his young friend temporarily so that he would be safe until he could receive much better treatment.

"Look at yourself, Joe," urged Robert. "You're certainly a sight."

With an effort Joseph raised himself upon one elbow and glanced at his blood-stained leg. One look was enough, however, for with a quick intake of his breath Joseph suddenly fainted away.

"Now I've done it," exclaimed Robert. "I

ought to have known better than to say a thing like that."

"He all right," said Deerfoot stoically.

"But he has fainted," Robert protested. "How can we bring him to?"

"No try," said Deerfoot. "Let him stay fainted."

"Won't it hurt him any?"

"No," said Deerfoot, and he had apparently dismissed the subject from his mind, for he turned his back on the two brothers and glanced out over the battlefield.

As long as Black Hawk's band remained in their present position the three volunteers were safe where they were. They were crouched upon the ground behind the log which provided ample protection. Behind them were their own men, while they were well screened from the enemy.

"How long are we going to stay here?" demanded Robert at length.

Deerfoot made no answer, and to all outward appearances he did not even hear the question.

"How long are we going to stay here?" Robert repeated.

"You want to leave?" asked Deerfoot mildly.

"Deerfoot snatched his tomahawk from his belt and hurled it with all his force."

"Well," said Robert, "it's growing dark and it doesn't seem to me we ought to stay here much longer. Some one of Black Hawk's braves will sneak around in back of us and we'll be cut off if we are not careful."

"That right," Deerfoot agreed, and he glanced at Joseph as he spoke. As he did so, the wounded young pioneer opened his eyes and sighed heavily.

"We're going to carry you the rest of the way now, Joe," Robert announced cheerily. "We'll start any time you say."

"I'm ready," replied Joseph, at the same time trying to force a smile.

"All right then, Deerfoot, let's go," said Robert. "We'll carry him just as we did before. You don't mind if the trip is rough, do you, Joe? We've got to travel fast, you know."

"The faster the better," said Joseph.

Deerfoot reconnoitered the nearby ground, but saw nothing to alarm him. Everything was quiet, even the guns having ceased momentarily.

"We go now," announced Deerfoot, and he and Robert bent down to pick up their wounded young companion. They were just lifting him

from the ground when a warning shout caused them to set him down quickly once more.

"What was that?" cried Robert. He immediately seized his rifle and held it ready for instant use. Deerfoot, too, was instantly alert.

"Red!" The call was repeated. It was John Mason's voice and Robert recognized it at once. The little band of scouts were not more than thirty or forty yards distant so that conversation could easily be carried on.

"What is it?" called Robert.

"Come back as quickly as you can!" shouted Mason. "I think there are two Indians stealing up on you through the long grass."

"All right," replied Robert.

"We'd better hurry, Deerfoot," he exclaimed. "They say some Indians are creeping up on us here. We can't waste any more time."

"We wasted some listening to Mason," Joseph remarked.

"I know it," cried Robert impatiently. "Wouldn't you think he could see that we were starting when he yelled at us? We'll have to hurry more than ever now. Come on, Deerfoot," he urged, and once more he bent down and grasped Joseph by his ankles.

"What's the matter, Deerfoot?" he exclaimed angrily as the Pottowattomie made no move to help him.

Just at that moment, however, Deerfoot snatched his tomahawk from his belt and hurled it with all his force.

CHAPTER XIX

A LIVELY SKIRMISH

ROBERT wheeled instantly to discover the cause of Deerfoot's action. He was not a second too soon, for, as he turned, a tomahawk whizzed past his head, missing him only by a few inches. His sudden movement had saved his life.

As if springing from the ground itself, an Indian bore down upon him. The redskin was scarcely ten feet distant when the startled boy first caught sight of him. On he came with knife upraised, shouting his war whoop. Fury was depicted in every line of the Indian's countenance. Robert had his rifle in his hand, but, he had no time to take aim, so swiftly did his enemy charge. Instinctively, however, the young volunteer started to raise the gun to his shoulder. He realized at once that he would

not have time to take aim, and accordingly before the barrel was above the level of his hips he fired.

Even at so short a distance the bullet went wild. The report of the gun, the flash and the smoke checked the Indian momentarily, however, and this check undoubtedly saved Robert's life. Following the discharge of the gun, almost instantly Deerfoot hurled himself through the air upon the body of the onrushing Sac. The two men came together with a thud and a moment later they were struggling on the ground.

Robert was so stunned by the unexpected turn of events that he merely stood and looked at the fight going on at his feet. Joseph, on the other hand, had not lost his wits for even an instant.

"Jump in there and help Deerfoot, Bob!" he cried. "What are you standing around doing nothing for?"

To Robert it had seemed as if this contest was to be just like the one he had decided in Deerfoot's favor only a few moments before. It was hard for him to distinguish one Indian from the other, but he stood over the two, ready

to follow Joseph's instructions the moment an opportunity should offer.

Deerfoot's opponent had a long knife in his hand. He struggled desperately to get a chance to use it, while Deerfoot fought with all his strength to prevent this move. He had seized his adversary by the wrist and clung desperately to the hand which was holding the deadly knife.

"Knock that knife out of his hand!" called Joseph excitedly. He partly raised himself from the ground and even tried to rise to his feet. This was out of the question, however, and he sank back with a groan.

"Rap him on the knuckles! What's the matter with you, Bob?" he cried. "Why don't you do something?"

As the hand which held the knife swung in his direction Robert did shake off his lethargy and was able to do something. He struck the hostile redman with all his force directly across the wrist. He used a stone which he had picked up for the purpose. The blow was a severe one and it accomplished its object. The fingers relaxed their grip on the handle and the knife slipped to the ground.

"Grab it, quick!" directed Joseph. "Don't let him have it again!"

Robert pounced upon the weapon and having availed himself of it turned to use it on his enemy. It was not necessary, however. The blow which Robert had dealt had broken the Indian's wrist and rendered his hand useless. Deerfoot found no difficulty in dealing with an opponent who now had the use of only one arm.

He quickly disposed of his adversary and both Robert and Joseph turned their backs with a shudder as Deerfoot tore the scalp from his victim's head. There was no use in arguing with him about the act now, however.

"Let's hurry!" exclaimed Robert, when Deerfoot had completed his gruesome task.

"No go yet," replied Deerfoot. He quickly stepped over the log which had sheltered them all so well, and parting the bushes disclosed to view another Indian who lay lifeless on the ground. Deerfoot immediately set to work to tear his bloody trophy from the head of this brave also.

"Where did that Indian come from?" exclaimed Robert in surprise.

"Didn't you see Deerfoot throw his tomahawk?" asked Joseph.

"Yes, but I didn't know it was at that man."

"Certainly it was," said Joseph. "His aim was evidently good, too."

"I should say so. Just suppose it hadn't been though. I hate to think of what might have happened to us if he had missed." Robert shivered at the mere thought of such a thing.

At this moment Deerfoot reappeared, his work completed. "We go now," he exclaimed quickly.

"It's about time," said Robert as he bent over to pick up his brother. Once more he grasped him by the ankles while Deerfoot held him under his arms. Thus burdened, they turned and started back to the shelter of the trees.

"Come along," shouted John Mason cheerily. "We'll keep watch that no one else gets close to you. Come as fast as you can and keep low."

"I'm low enough," exclaimed Joseph, as his back bumped upon a mound of earth.

"Sorry, Joe, I didn't mean to scrape you," Robert apologized.

"Don't worry about me," said Joseph. "You can bump me all you want if you will only get

me back quickly. My wound feels better now since Deerfoot bandaged it."

Stumbling and tripping often, they hurried on their way. Shouts and words of encouragement were flung at them from their comrades and served as a spur to the three friends. Soon they reached their original positions where a warm welcome was waiting for them.

"Great work!" cried Walt, risking his life to run forward and shake hands with all three of the volunteers. "You all did splendidly."

"Indeed you did!" echoed John Mason. "We are very proud of you."

"Who can fix Joe's leg?" demanded Robert. He had no interest in the words of praise being heaped upon them. At least, his brother's welfare was the first thought that came into his mind.

"Is he hurt badly?" exclaimed Walt anxiously.

"I think not," replied Robert. "It seems like a flesh wound, but it ought to be attended to."

"Of course it had," said John Mason. "Some one help me carry him back here a little way and I'll soon fix him up."

Once more Joseph was lifted from the ground and borne farther back from the firing line.

John Mason set to work at once and it was easy to see from the way he conducted himself that he was an expert in the art of looking after wounds. In a very few moments he had doctored Joseph so successfully that he was able to bear some weight upon his injured limb. With two men supporting him he was even able to hobble along for a few steps.

"Do you think you can ride your horse?" asked John Mason anxiously.

"I know I can," replied Joseph.

"That's good news. If we have to run for it you'll certainly need The Swallow to help you out."

"I can shoot a gun, too," exclaimed Joseph.

"Maybe you can," admitted Mason. "At the same time you're not going to try it just now."

"Let me have just one shot," he pleaded.

"What's the use, Joe?" demanded Robert. "It will be dark in half an hour and the fight will be over. We don't need you. The Indians are beaten. Why, we killed three ourselves and they won't risk any more men."

"Don't be too sure about that," cautioned Mason. "It's true that night is coming on and I don't believe they'd try to attack us in the

dark, but I have a feeling that they may make one last try before night really falls."

The firing had slackened in the last few moments and there seemed to be a decided lull in the hostilities. This state of affairs was not of long duration, however, for suddenly the war whoop sounded again and the firing recommenced. John Mason was right. The Indians were making a last desperate attempt to overcome their foes.

"You stay here, Joe," exclaimed Robert. "Here, sit behind this tree and we will come after you if anything happens."

"I don't worry about that," said Joseph. "Please don't let anything happen, though."

"Not if we can help it," exclaimed Mason. "Come on, Bob," he urged. "They need us out there in front I guess."

Walt and Deerfoot already had taken their places on the firing line again and Robert and Mason soon joined them. The Indians were closer now and were evidently striving desperately to strike a telling blow at the white men.

The approaching darkness was a great aid to the Indians, who crept determinedly nearer and nearer to the band of scouts. It was hard

to discover them in the dusk and every moment it seemed as if the flash of a hostile rifle came from a new place. The flash came and then when the scouts' fire was directed at the spot the Indian apparently had moved. The next shot would come from a spot ten or fifteen feet to the left or right; it was impossible to tell which beforehand.

"They'll outflank us," exclaimed John Mason anxiously. "If they ever get around to our rear we won't stand any chance at all."

Already three of the scouts had fallen. Two of them were dead and the other, a man named William Reach, was mortally wounded. What the casualties on the Indian side were it was impossible to tell. At any rate the advance had not been checked. Using every bit of cover, the redmen pressed forward relentlessly. Every moment the position of the scouts became more untenable.

"We'll have to fall back," exclaimed Walt at length. "Go slow, though," he called, "and keep your guns busy all the time."

Fighting every inch of the distance, the scouts retreated. From tree to tree they went, doggedly and stubbornly contesting the ground with

their opponents. The Indians were not to be denied, however, and it was soon apparent that the white men must run for their lives. They were outnumbered by their foes and unless they made their escape soon it was evident that they would be caught in a trap."

Walt turned to Robert. "You and Deerfoot go and put your brother on his horse," he ordered. "Then you both get on your ponies and run for it. We will follow right behind you."

"Don't you need us here?" exclaimed Robert, loath to leave his place on the front.

"Yes, we need you," admitted Walt. "Joseph needs you more, though. Go to him as fast as you can. You'd better go quickly, too. Things may be pretty hot for us here in a few moments."

Robert delayed no longer. Summoning Deerfoot he hurried back to the place where they had left Joseph seated under the tree. On the way he saw two of his comrades bending over William Reach, the man who had been wounded. From their attitude he could see plainly that another member of the band had breathed his last.

CHAPTER XX

A MIDNIGHT RIDE

WHAT'S the matter, Bob?" exclaimed Joseph as he spied his brother and Deerfoot hastening in his direction.

"Everything's the matter," cried Robert. "The Indians are attacking us for all they are worth and we'll be surrounded unless we get out of here pretty quick."

"Get the ponies and I'm ready," said Joseph eagerly.

Deerfoot and Robert hastened to obey and in a very short time returned. Each one rode his own pony and Robert led The Swallow, holding the reins with his left hand. He quickly dismounted and Deerfoot did the same.

"Now," cried Robert cheerily, "just let us get hold of you, Joe, and you'll be in your saddle before you know it."

"Don't worry about me," exclaimed Joseph. "I'm almost as good as I ever was."

"That's the way to talk," said Robert heartily. "Are you all ready now?"

"All ready."

Deerfoot and Robert soon lifted Joseph into the saddle, where he seemed to be more at ease than he had been on the ground. His two friends watched him anxiously.

"Think you can stand it?" inquired Robert.

"I know I can."

"Then we go," exclaimed Deerfoot, and a moment later they were cantering swiftly toward the open prairie.

"Where are we going?" demanded Joseph.

"We go back to Dixon's," said Deerfoot.

"Who said to do that?" exclaimed Robert in surprise. "I haven't heard of anything like that."

"Walt say go there," explained Deerfoot.

"What about our dispatches?" demanded Joseph.

"He say band split. One half go Fort Armstrong. One half go Dixon's. We go Dixon's."

"You're sure about that, are you?" inquired Robert earnestly.

"Me sure," said Deerfoot confidently.

"What do you suppose his idea is?" Robert asked of his brother. He always had the feeling that Joseph would know the reason for almost anything. He had a great amount of confidence in his level-headed older brother.

"I don't know," said Joseph doubtfully. "Perhaps he thinks that the smaller the band the less chance there is of discovery. If we split in two we may throw the Indians off the trail."

"That's true," agreed Robert. "I suppose that was Walt's idea, too."

"How many of us are there anyway?" asked Joseph. "We started out with ten. Have we lost any men?"

"We certainly have. There are only six left now."

"What!" exclaimed Joseph. "You mean to say that four men were killed?"

"Indeed they were," said Robert sadly. "There are four men back there in those woods who'll never do any more Indian fighting."

"How about John Mason?" demanded Joseph. "Don't tell me he was killed."

"He was all right a few moments ago."

"I hope nothing happens to him," said Joseph earnestly. "He's too fine a man to lose."

At this moment they emerged from the swamp onto the prairie. Night had fallen and the full moon was just appearing over the rim of the horizon. The three fugitives were thus assured of some light to guide them on their long ride. Well it was too, for at present it was not safe to halt. The opinion seemed to be that their foes would not attempt any pursuit, but of this they could not be sure. Their one idea was to put as much distance between them and their enemies as the condition of Joseph's wound would permit. Thus far he was bearing up splendidly, but he was weak and could not be counted on for too great an exertion.

In silence they rode most of the time. Hour after hour passed and mile after mile was covered. The hardy ponies seemed tireless and with apparent ease maintained their steady gait across the plains. A halt was called about midnight so that men and horses might have a breathing spell, but after a short rest the journey was resumed. Not a sign of the enemy had they seen, but there was always the danger

of encountering roving bands and the three fugitives were all intent upon reaching Dixon's Ferry at the earliest possible moment.

As the first faint streaks of dawn appeared over the expanse of prairie the little settlement on the Rock River came into view. The sight spurred the tired travelers on and in a short time they were once more in the town and safe again. Safe at least until they should start out on their next expedition.

"Well, Joe," exclaimed Robert, as he and Deerfoot lifted the wounded young volunteer from the back of The Swallow. "How do you feel after your ride?"

"All right," said Joseph and promptly fainted. He had suffered much pain all through the long, hard night and had kept up on nerve alone. Now that the journey was ended he could resist no longer, but gave up entirely.

Robert and Deerfoot laid him tenderly upon the ground. "You stay here, Deerfoot," exclaimed Robert, "and I'll go and see about having Joe looked after in the hospital here."

He hastened away and soon returned to say that all arrangements had been made to receive his brother in the hospital. In a short space

of time Joseph was transferred to the house which temporarily served for that purpose. When Robert and Deerfoot were convinced that all arrangements had been made for his comfort, they left him there and sought their own quarters.

Dixon's Ferry now presented a forlorn appearance. General Atkinson with the army had moved on up the Rock River, leaving Major Stillman's corps at Dixon's Ferry to care for the wounded and to guard the supplies. No sooner had Atkinson left, however, than practically every man in Stillman's corps deserted and returned to his home. Disgracefully defeated, they now added further disgrace to their cowardly record by quitting their post.

The settlement was deserted except for a few of the men who had enough pride and patriotism to stick to their duty. All the supplies for the armies of Generals Atkinson and Whiteside were thus left practically unguarded. They were at the mercy of Black Hawk, should he choose to attack in force.

Robert was indignant and so was everyone else who remained. This did not bring the men back, however. Panic seemed to have

seized the whole country. Black Hawk's victory at Sycamore Creek had inspired the whole region with terror. Settlers fled from their homes, in many cases leaving all their valuables behind them. Sometimes even worse things than that happened. If they had not been so tragic they might have been amusing, as the following story, told to Robert by one of the men, illustrates.

There was one family that lived near the Iroquois River in the northeastern part of Illinois. They owned no horses, but had a large family of small children, eleven in all. In the course of their flight it was necessary for them to cross the river. Coming to the bank they found it was impossible for the small children to cross unaided. The stream was high and rapid, so that the father had to carry the little ones over one at a time. Trip after trip he made until he had them all across, as he thought. They were about to continue their flight when a cry from the opposite bank arrested their attention.

Standing on the bank of the stream and crying piteously was little Susan, just four years old. In the excitement she had been over-

looked. The father at once plunged into the stream again to rescue his child, when the mother, seeing it, cried out, "Never mind Susan; we have succeeded in getting ten over, which is more than we expected at first—and we can better spare Susan than you, my dear." So poor little Susan was abandoned by her panic-stricken family and left to the mercy of the savages. No harm came to her, however, for one of the neighbors out hunting found her and took charge of her. Thus the poor child's life was saved, though not through any help from her family who had treated her so shabbily.

This was a sample of the conditions existing on the border at that time, however. The settlers were in a constant state of panic. The rustle of a wild animal in the underbrush; the howl of a wolf in the prairie; the fall of a forest bough were enough to blanch the cheeks of the bravest men.

"It makes me so mad!" exclaimed Robert hotly. "The women and children can lose their nerve if they want, but when the men do, too, there is no excuse for them."

He was sitting beside Joseph's cot in the

hospital the next day after their arrival, and was giving full vent to his feelings.

"I know it," replied Joseph. "It isn't right at all."

"Isn't right!" exclaimed Robert. "Well, I should say not! Even the troops are losing heart. A fine bunch of cowards we enlisted with, I should say."

"There is no use in getting so excited about it, Bob," said Joseph quietly.

"Yes, there is too. It does me good to say what I think, anyway."

"Perhaps that's true," laughed Joseph. "At any rate you and I are going to do our duty, no matter what the others may do."

"We certainly are," cried Robert. "Deerfoot will stand by us, too."

"Of course he will. What does he think about things anyway?"

"How do I know? Did you ever hear Deerfoot say what he thought about anything like this? I never did myself."

"Nor I," agreed Joseph. "He doesn't express himself very freely, does he?"

"He certainly does not," Robert agreed. "He not only doesn't express his opinion, but

he doesn't say anything at all. You know how I like to talk, and it gets on my nerves to talk and talk to Deerfoot and have him grunt and grunt and once in a while say yes or no."

"You mustn't mind that," laughed Joseph. "That is only his way and you know what a good friend of ours he really is."

"Certainly I do. Just at present, though, I don't feel like sitting around and doing nothing. There isn't even anyone to talk to hardly and I want to talk at least."

"We'll have lots to do in a little while, I guess," said Joseph. "This war isn't over by any means yet and just as quick as my leg is better we can look around and find something."

"When are you going to be well?"

"I don't know," replied Joseph. "The doctor said in less than two weeks anyway, and probably before then. If anything very important happens before that time you can be sure that I'll be in it, wound or no wound."

"You'll be all right soon, I guess," said Robert cheerily. "I hope so anyway. General Atkinson is chasing Black Hawk up the Rock and you and I don't want to miss any of the fun."

"We won't miss any; don't worry about that.

When Black Hawk gets into those swamps up at the head of the Rock River near the lakes, you can be sure it will take more than two weeks to drive him out. We'll see all the 'fun' we want, all right."

"I hope so," exclaimed Robert earnestly. "And now I must leave," he added as he rose to go. "Good-bye, Joe. I'll come in again soon."

"Good-bye, Bob," said Joseph. "If Deerfoot talks too much, tell me and I'll ask him to stop."

"I only wish he'd start," laughed Robert, as he left his brother's room and made his way back to the tent which he and Deerfoot shared.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIGHT ON THE PEKATONIKA

TWO weeks passed and Joseph was entirely healed of his wound. A slight limp at times was the only trace that remained and that promised to disappear soon. He was up and as cheerful as ever. They were still at Dixon's Ferry and the inaction did not gall Joseph as much as it did his impetuous brother.

He spent much of his time with The Swallow, grooming and caring for the beautiful pony. He had taught the intelligent animal to come at his whistle and most of the time the horse followed at his heels in much the same manner a dog would do. Every day Joseph's pride in his mount grew. He never ceased to wonder at the easy gait and the wonderful speed The Swallow exhibited on the frequent rides they took over the prairies.

There had been no organized fighting of late. General Atkinson had returned to Dixon's Ferry as soon as he learned of the desertion of Major Stillman's corps. He had left General Whiteside to carry on the pursuit of Black Hawk, while he returned with the regulars to protect the supplies left at Dixon's Ferry.

Whiteside's men soon became tired of soldiering, however. Black Hawk had crossed the northern border of Illinois and was now in Michigan. He had gone into the unexplored and almost impenetrable swamps of the north, the men declared, and could never be captured. At any rate they said that, being Illinois volunteers, they were not required to serve outside the state. They also claimed they had enlisted for only a month and that their time of service had expired.

After two or three days of fruitless skirmishing and before they had come to the Michigan state line, a council of officers was held and further search for Black Hawk was abandoned. They had penetrated only as far as the Kishwaukee River, not many miles north of the place where Stillman was defeated on Sycamore Creek. However, they turned and

marched south to Ottawa, where, at their own request, they were mustered out of service by Governor Reynolds on the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth of May, 1832.

On their way from the Kishwaukee to Ottawa the militiamen stopped at a farm on Indian creek where a few days before a terrible massacre of Whites had taken place. The mutilated bodies of fifteen men, women and children lay unburied upon the ground. This frightful scene instead of inspiring the troops to renewed action against the Indians, still further discouraged them. They were more eager than ever to give up the fight.

Governor Reynolds was active, however, and at once called for a fresh levy of "at least two thousand troops." These men were to assemble at Beardstown, a place on the Illinois River south of Dixon's Ferry, and were to serve through the war. Meanwhile the government at Washington ordered a thousand regulars under General Winfield Scott to proceed from their stations on the coast to the seat of war.

General Atkinson had been greatly disturbed by the failure of the first campaign and the

cowardice of the militia shamed him deeply. At his earnest appeal three hundred mounted volunteer rangers agreed to remain in the field and protect the line of Illinois settlements until the new army could be mobilized. Colonel Henry Frye was in command of this company, and Joseph, Robert and Deerfoot lost no time in enrolling themselves with this band.

"It sounds as though we'd find something to do with them," was Robert's way of explaining the move. "We've been idle long enough and we can't get very much revenge if we just sit and do nothing."

"You're right, Bob," agreed Joseph. "My leg is all right now and I'm just as anxious as you are to be active again."

"Oh, no you're not," remarked Robert. "It isn't possible for any one to be as eager about it as I am."

"Well, we won't argue it anyway," laughed Joseph. "We'll compromise and say we're both eager."

"Does that suit you, Deerfoot?" inquired Robert, at the same time winking slyly at his brother.

"Ugh," grunted Deerfoot.

"Does Joseph's suggestion suit you?" Robert persisted.

"Sure, me suit," replied the Pottowattomie seriously, and try as he might Robert was unable to get any other answer from the red man. The young frontiersman was full of mischief and took special delight in teasing Deerfoot. The Indian took everything seriously and never seemed to be able to appreciate the fact that white boys sometimes said things in fun that they did not mean.

"Oh, you're hopeless," exclaimed Robert in mock despair. "Haven't you any sense of humor at all, Deerfoot?"

"Huh?" grunted the Indian blankly.

"Never mind," laughed Robert. "You're all right, Deerfoot, and if I meant all I said the way you do I guess I'd be a better critizen than I am now."

Deerfoot did not understand what all this talk was about and he looked in amazement from one to the other of the boys. They were much amused at his bewilderment, but they soon ceased teasing him. It always made them feel that they were taking an unfair advantage of their faithful friend, and like all true sports-

men they derived no pleasure from a contest that was unequal.

"I wonder if there has been any fighting lately," said Joseph a few moments later.

"Of course there has," exclaimed Robert. "It is going on all the time and at this very minute I suppose some poor family is being murdered."

"Where?" demanded Deerfoot innocently.

"I don't know where," said Robert. "I just said I supposed some family somewhere was being murdered."

"Ugh," grunted Deerfoot. He asked no more questions and merely shook his head in token that he did not understand.

The three friends were seated under a large oak tree. The time was mid-afternoon and they were enjoying the warm sunshine and the fine June weather. It was a lazy day and the three volunteers felt lazy themselves. They had done nothing for so long they had acquired the habit of being idle. At the same time the inaction was not entirely to their liking, as was evidenced by their conversation.

"I wish something would happen," yawned Robert. "I must say I'm bored."

As he finished speaking a man was seen ap-

proaching on horseback. This was not an unusual sight in itself, but when time hangs heavy on one's hands almost anything is of interest. The three friends sat up and watched the horseman as he came near.

"Why, it's John Mason!" exclaimed Joseph suddenly. "Where do you suppose he has been?"

"He'll probably tell us in a couple of minutes," said Robert, rising to his feet.

Mason rode straight to the tree where the three men were and quickly dismounted. He shook hands heartily all around and was accorded a most enthusiastic welcome. Innumerable questions were asked of him by the two brothers, but he made no attempt to answer them at that time. "You two boys are regular interrogation points," he exclaimed laughingly. "Just give me a chance to catch my breath and I'll try to reply to some of your questions."

"Have you been in any more fights?" demanded Robert.

"I should say I had."

"Tell us about it quick," Robert insisted, but Joseph restrained him.

"Give Mr. Mason a chance, Bob," he said.

"Don't you see he is tired and wants to rest? Perhaps he doesn't want to tell us about it anyway."

"Yes, I do, too," exclaimed Mason. "First of all, though, I want to say we got our dispatches to Fort Armstrong safely and didn't even seen an Indian on the way."

"We didn't either," said Joseph. "We came back here without a bit of trouble."

"I see you are safe and sound. How is the wounded leg?"

"As good as ever," replied Joseph and he executed a war dance to prove the truth of his statement.

"Good for you," cried John Mason. "Now, are you ready to hear about the fight?"

"I am," exclaimed Robert quickly.

"All right then," said Mason. "Here goes. I had been sent to Fort Hamilton from Fort Armstrong and was there on the fourteenth of June. That was just about a week ago. Word came to us on the next day that a scouting party of Sacs had killed five men the day before at the Spafford farm. The farm lies on the Pekatonika River, not far from Fort Hamilton. Colonel Henry Dodge was in command

of the brigade stationed at the fort and at once started in pursuit of the Indians. Never being willing to be left out of anything I asked to be allowed to go along and received the desired permission.

"We set out with all possible speed and soon came upon the trail of the Indians. In fact we were so close to them at one time that we could see some of the warriors. We had no chance to shoot, however, and the Indians fled with amazing speed. They crossed and recrossed the Pekatonika several times, but we pressed them closer and closer, and at length when they saw that escape was impossible they made a stand. We immediately dismounted and cautiously picked our way forward. The Sacs had taken up their position in a dense thicket and were waiting for us.

"Colonel Dodge intended that we should fire a volley and then charge. The Indians, however, were on the lookout for us and fired first. One of our soldiers, a man named Apple, was killed, and a man named Jenkins was wounded. We never let up on them for a moment, however, and several were shot as they attempted to escape by swimming the river. When the

fight started I think our forces were about equal in strength, but the Indians had been in the river so much that many of them had got their powder wet and so their guns were useless."

"It should have been easy to finish them then," remarked Robert.

"Don't you think so!" exclaimed Mason warmly. "Their guns may have been no good to them, but they still had knives and they tried to close in on us with those. They fought desperately, but many of them were shot down. One big, burly brave came plunging directly at me. He had his gun to his shoulder and when only a few yards distant he pulled the trigger. The powder was wet, however, and it did not go off. I raised my rifle, but my powder was also damp and so nothing happened when I tried to fire, either. Meanwhile, knife in hand, the savage came toward me. My case was desperate, but I still had my revolver and when he was but a few scant feet away I drew it and shot him down."

"Whew!" exclaimed Joseph. "That was pretty close, wasn't it?"

"Too close to be comfortable," said Mason

grimly. "I can tell you I was frightened there for a couple of seconds."

"You had good reason to be," agreed Robert. "But tell me," he continued, "how did the fight finally end?"

"As far as I know every one of the Indians was killed. Of course I can't be sure of that, but I don't think a single one escaped. Our men fought like demons that day."

"That's the way to fight!" exclaimed Robert. "At least that's the way to do when you're fighting demons."

"All Indians aren't demons," laughed Mason. "Just look at Deerfoot here."

"No, he isn't one, I know," agreed Robert. "You can fight like one just the same, can't you, Deerfoot?"

"Ugh," grunted the Pottowattomie, much embarrassed by the attention being paid him.

"If you had been as near to him in that fight the other day as I was," Robert continued, "you'd have thought he was a demon all right."

"We're glad he's on our side, I guess," remarked Joseph earnestly.

"We certainly are," echoed Robert. "How many men did you lose in that fight on the

Pekatonika?" he asked, turning to Mason once more.

"Three men killed and one wounded. That wasn't so bad considering what we did to the Indians, was it?"

"I should say not," exclaimed Robert.

At that moment a messenger came up to the place where they were seated and handed a note to Joseph. The young volunteer tore it open at once and eagerly scanned the contents, while the others watched him with deep interest.

CHAPTER XXII

APPLE RIVER FORT

"WE leave for Galena at once," announced Joseph when he had finished reading his communication.

"Good!" exclaimed Robert, immediately jumping to his feet. "At last we are going to do something."

"Who is ordered to go?" asked Mason.

"Why, Bob, Deerfoot and I," replied Joseph. "I wish you were going too."

"So do I," exclaimed Mason. "I think I'll see if I can arrange it."

"Go on," urged Robert. "Four is just the right number and we need you along with us."

"All right," agreed Mason. "You three go get ready to start and I'll see what can be done. I hope I'll be with you."

"We do, too," said Joseph eagerly. "We'll see you soon."

They hastened away and were soon busied with their preparations for the journey. This task did not take long, however, and they were soon ready to leave. They were engaged in saddling their horses when John Mason rode joyously up to the spot where they were standing.

"It's all right, boys," he announced. "I am going with you."

"Fine!" exclaimed Joseph and Robert in one breath. Deerfoot even relaxed so far as to show that he too was pleased to have John Mason a member of the party.

"Do you know where your errand is at Galena?" Mason inquired of Joseph.

"We are to take some dispatches to a Colonel Strode. Do you know him?"

"Yes, indeed. I think he is in command there, isn't he?"

"I can't say as to that," replied Joseph. "At any rate he is the man we are to see."

"You haven't got the dispatches yet, have you?" asked Robert.

"No. I am going after them now. I'll meet

you right here in about ten minutes and then we'll be all ready to start."

The young volunteer swung himself gracefully into his saddle and a moment later The Swallow was bearing him swiftly toward headquarters. True to his word he was back again in ten minutes and without further delay the four horsemen set out. They soon crossed the Rock River and struck across country for Galena.

So long as enough light remained for them to see their way they kept on. They had not started until late afternoon, however, so before a great many miles had been covered it became necessary to call a halt. Camp was pitched and preparations made for the night. Lots were drawn and the night divided into four parts, each member of the party standing guard for one quarter of the time. Though no sign of the enemy had been seen it was felt to be very necessary to have a watch. Roving bands of Black Hawk's warriors infested the country and it was never possible to tell just when and where they would be encountered.

Soon after daylight the journey was continued. The little band kept close together and

a sharp lookout was maintained at all times. They followed the old trail from Chicago to Galena and toward noon came to Kellogg's Grove Fort, on Plum River. They stopped there for their noonday meal and then soon after proceeded on their way. Excellent progress was made and several hours before sundown they spied a small blockhouse, called Apple River Fort, about fourteen miles east of Galena.

"That's Apple River Fort!" exclaimed John Mason as the sturdy little building appeared in the distance. "We've made good time and we'll be in Galena before long."

"If we reach there before dark it will be time enough," said Joseph.

"Plenty of time," agreed Mason. "Why——"

The sharp report of a rifle interrupted him. He was half turned about in his saddle and held the reins loosely in one hand. His right hand rested on his horse's back as he looked around at his companions. The rifle ball struck him squarely in the right forearm and nearly precipitated him from the saddle. At the same time his horse jumped and only superb horsemanship saved the man from being thrown to the ground.

"Are you hurt?" cried Robert anxiously.

"In the arm. It isn't anything," said Mason quickly.

"Can you ride all right?" demanded Joseph.

"Of course I can."

"Then we'd better waste no time. Just look back there!"

One glance was sufficient. Behind them and coming on at full speed was a war party of over one hundred Indians. Once more the two brothers heard the war whoop resound over the plains and again they fled for their lives.

"Make for the fort!" cried Mason. He set spurs to his horse and closely followed by the three others raced for the blockhouse looming up before them. The yells of the Indians sounded in their ears, while bullets cut the air all about them.

Joseph soon outdistanced the others, owing to the superior speed of The Swallow, and he was the first to arrive at the fort. His comrades were not far behind, however, and as they came within the protection of the stockade they were greeted by a cheer from the occupants who had watched the thrilling race with breathless interest. At the same time a volley from

the rifles of the defenders caused the Indians to halt abruptly.

A moment later the four messengers were inside the fort and were preparing to assist in its defense. Men, women and children were there, all gathered from the nearby cabins and surrounding farms. John Mason's wound quickly received attention and was found to be not at all serious. When it had been bathed and bound up he was even able to handle his gun.

"Whew! We reached here just in time, I should say," exclaimed Joseph, wiping his brow.

"Yes, but wasn't that fun?" said Robert excitedly. "It certainly was great sport racing those fellows."

"Now that it's over, it was all right," agreed Joseph. "I'd hate to have to do that every day though."

"Let's lend a hand here," exclaimed Robert eagerly. "There are a couple of portholes over there we can take care of. Look at Deerfoot; he is already as busy as he can be."

The inside of the fort presented a curious scene. At every porthole was a man with a rifle. As fast as they could load they fired out

at the horde of yelling savages, who in turn were showering bullets on the walls of the stockade. Powder was plentiful, but the defenders were short of bullets. Fortunately a supply of lead had been received from Galena only an hour before, however, and the women were now busied in molding bullets. As fast as they could they melted the lead and molded it into rifle balls. The men were gallant in their defense, but so also were the women. They worked like beavers and had it not been for their splendid efforts the fort must surely have fallen.

The Indians were on all sides. Every bit of cover seemed to hide one of the red men. A steady fire was kept up against the fort, but, thanks to the thickness and strength of its walls, the bullets could not penetrate. At the same time the heroic efforts of its defenders kept the Indians from attacking too recklessly.

An officer named Captain Stone was in command of the fort. He went from one to another of the men, urging them to still greater efforts and encouraging everyone by his air of quiet confidence and courage. Joseph ran short of bullets and had gone for more. As he was re-

ceiving a fresh supply, Captain Stone approached the spot where he was standing.

"That was a narrow escape you had, young man," he remarked.

"Yes, sir," replied Joseph, touching his cap. "We have had so many lately, though, that we are sort of becoming used to them."

"What is your name?" inquired Captain Stone.

"Joseph Hall."

"Are you the young man who owns The Swallow?"

"Yes, sir."

"I've heard of you, then. You are famous all along the frontier. Were you on The Swallow when you came in here?"

"Yes," replied Joseph, much pleased by the captain's remarks. "There stands The Swallow right now." And he pointed to a corner of the fort where the horses were tethered.

"I must go and see him, when this fight is over. That is, if we win."

"Of course we'll win," exclaimed Joseph. "Don't you think so?"

"Unless they set fire to us."

"You don't think they'll do that, do you?

Why, they couldn't get close enough to us at any rate."

"After dark they might. Still, I don't believe they will," Captain Stone continued. "The blaze could be seen for miles and would bring a swarm of troops down upon them in a very short time."

Captain Stone hurried on and Joseph resumed his place at the porthole once more. Every gun was needed, as the men in the fort numbered only about twenty-five, while the Indians from all appearances had at least four times that number. Several of the red men had been either killed or wounded, for every few moments one of them could be seen being carried off the field of battle. So far no one inside the fort had even been wounded and the fight had been going on for at least a half-hour.

This happy state of affairs did not last long, however, for hardly had Joseph returned to his post when a bullet penetrated the porthole next to the one Robert defended. The man stationed there had just raised his head to take aim when the bullet struck him. He fell back, and even before the two boys could spring to his assistance, he died.

Almost at the same moment a man on the opposite side of the fort was shot. He too had been peering out of the porthole, but fortunately the ball just grazed his head, inflicting only a slight scalp wound. These occurrences only served to increase the ardor of the defenders, however. Every man returned to his task with renewed energy and the fire from the fort continued even more furiously than before.

"Black Hawk out there," said Deerfoot quietly to Joseph a few moments later.

"What!" exclaimed Joseph. "Black Hawk himself?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure?" demanded Joseph. "Did you see him yourself?"

"Me see him sure."

"Show him to me."

"No see him now," said Deerfoot.

"Did you hear that, Bob?" cried Joseph. "Deerfoot says he saw Black Hawk himself out there."

"You did?" cried Robert excitedly to Deerfoot. "Show him to me and let me take a shot at him."

"Me take shot at him," said Deerfoot. "No hit him though. He gone now."

"All the others seem to be leaving too," exclaimed Joseph, after a careful glance out of the porthole which he was guarding.

Sure enough, the Indians did appear to be withdrawing. Their fire was slackening and they evidently were convinced that the sacrifice necessary to take the fort would not be worth while. Everywhere they appeared to be retreating. Loud yells of triumph sounded from sturdy little Apple River Fort as its defenders saw their enemy moving away.

The white men did not escape loss, however. Even from the fort the Indians could be seen pillaging the nearby houses and barns. Cattle and horses that could not be moved inside the stockade were being driven away, and the Indians were loading the horses with bags of provisions taken from the storehouses of the settlers.

"That can't be helped, I'm afraid," remarked Captain Stone when he heard what was going on. "We still have our lives and we ought to count ourselves lucky. Certainly they are worth more than a few cattle and some provisions."

Everyone else seemed to share this view, though at first a few of the more daring ones had been eager to sally out and continue the contest. They were soon persuaded that such an undertaking would be foolhardy, however, and were content to remain where they were.

Joseph still had his dispatches for Colonel Strode and he was at a loss as to what he should do about them. Finally he decided to ask Captain Stone.

"Don't even think of going now!" exclaimed that officer, when Joseph asked his opinion about pushing on that night. "Why, it's almost dark now and you don't know how many of those Indians are still lurking about. I consider that you've done enough for today. By all means wait until morning before you even consider leaving here."

This advice Joseph reported to his three companions, who all agreed with Captain Stone. Even Robert thought it might be advisable to wait. It was so decided and they immediately made preparations to spend the night at Apple River Fort.

CHAPTER XXIII

ACROSS COUNTRY

THE Indians had evidently given up all idea of capturing the fort, for no sign of them appeared during the night, and in the morning it was even considered safe to venture outside the stockade. This was done with great caution, however, for it was never safe to count on anything that a hostile Indian might do.

"I wish I'd seen Black Hawk," exclaimed Robert, while he and his three companions were eating breakfast. "You're sure he was there, Deerfoot?"

"Me sure," said the Pottowattomie confidently.

"He ought to know him when he sees him," said Joseph. "You've seen him lots of times, haven't you, Deerfoot?" he asked.

"Yes, plenty time," Deerfoot assented.

"Just suppose I could have shot him," exclaimed Robert excitedly. "Why, the whole war would probably have stopped at once, and think what a hero I'd be."

"Wouldn't you just as soon capture him, Red?" laughed John Mason. "As long as you intend to be a hero, wouldn't you be willing to be one without any loss of life?"

"Yes," agreed Robert. "I guess I'd just as soon capture him."

"Let's hope he doesn't capture us is all I can say," exclaimed Joseph, earnestly. "He might not be as good to us as Bob would be to him."

"I didn't say I'd be good to him," protested Robert.

"I'm afraid you're a blood-thirsty young man," remarked Mason laughingly. "Don't you think we'd better get started on our way to Galena pretty soon?" he added, addressing his remarks to Joseph.

"I do," agreed Joseph. "You're not going with us, though, with your arm wounded the way it is."

"Certainly I'm going. Why, that little scratch isn't bad enough to need bandaging hardly."

"All right then," said Joseph. "Let's be off."

They hastened to saddle their horses and were in the midst of saying their good-byes to the brave defenders of the little fort when a great commotion arrested their attention. Shouts from the guards and the excitement of the inmates running to and fro warned them that something of great interest was taking place.

"What's it all about, do you suppose?" exclaimed Joseph curiously.

"I don't know," replied Robert quickly, "but I intend to find out at once."

He hastened to join the crowd which was rapidly gathering at one end of the fort. The gates had been opened and the people were peering eagerly out. Robert took one look and then turned and called to his companions. "Come here, quick!" he cried. "There is something worth seeing out here."

No time was lost in obeying and a few moments later Joseph, Deerfoot and John Mason had joined the people who were gazing eagerly out from their position inside the fort.

"Look at them!" exclaimed Joseph. "Who do you suppose they are?"

"From Galena, I guess," replied Mason. A hundred horsemen rode toward the fort. A great cloud of dust rose about them and a loud cheer from the throats of the fort's defenders went out to greet the newcomers. It was easy to see that the riders were white men, and consequently were friends. With this reinforcement there was but slight danger that Black Hawk would dare return to the attack.

Captain Stone hastened out to meet the fresh arrivals and soon everyone else was also gathered around the horsemen, who had now drawn rein and halted just outside the fort.

"Who is that officer Captain Stone is talking to?" Joseph inquired of John Mason.

"That is Colonel Strode."

"The man I want to see," exclaimed Joseph. "Do you suppose I can give him these dispatches now? That would save us a trip to Galena."

"I don't see why you can't," replied Mason. "When he finishes talking to Captain Stone go up and hand them to him."

Joseph followed this advice and when a chance presented itself a few moments later, he pushed The Swallow through the crowd and ap-

proached Colonel Strode. He saluted and started to speak.

"Colonel Strode," he began, "I have some dispatches for you from Colonel Zachary Taylor at Dixon's Ferry. I thought perhaps I might give them to you now instead of going to Galena."

"Is your name Hall?" asked Colonel Strode abruptly.

"Why, yes," replied Joseph, surprised that the Colonel should know who he was.

"I thought so. I recognized you by your horse."

"This pony seems to be very famous," laughed Joseph, patting The Swallow affectionately on the neck.

"I should say he was. You'll be famous, too, if you don't stop killing Indians."

Joseph blushed furiously and was much embarrassed by this compliment, paid him in the presence of so many people. He could not say a word, but merely held the dispatches out to the Colonel.

"From Colonel Taylor, you say?"

"Yes, sir," answered Joseph.

"All right, young man, and thank you very

much. How is Colonel Taylor? He is a warm friend of mine and a splendid man."

"He is very well," said Joseph. Little did he imagine that the man they were discussing was later to become the president of the United States.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Colonel Strode warmly. "I'm also glad to meet you and to see what the new owner of The Swallow looks like." He smiled pleasantly at the young volunteer and then turned away to give an order to one of his aides. Joseph realized that he was dismissed and quickly withdrew.

"We may as well start back," he said when he had rejoined his comrades.

"Your business all finished here?" asked Robert.

"All finished."

"Let's go then," exclaimed Robert. "I don't believe we can do anything more for the people here."

A few moments later the four scouts were on their way back to Dixon's Ferry, their errand accomplished. Their safe return was by no means assured, however, for they well knew that Black Hawk and his war party were prob-

ably not far distant. His failure to take Apple River Fort would make the chief all the more relentless against his next foe.

It was easy to follow the trail of the marauding Indians, for they had taken no pains to cover up their tracks. The four volunteers did not long keep on this trail, however. Deerfoot led the way and he soon turned to the others.

"We better go 'round," he remarked.

"Go ''round'," exclaimed John Mason. "What do you mean?"

"He means," explained Joseph, "that we'd better make a detour and not keep on this trail any longer."

"Ugh," grunted Deerfoot, nodding his head in token that Joseph's explanation was the correct one.

"That's perfectly right," agreed Mason. "I think that is the only thing to do. Certainly if we keep on this way we're apt to catch up with the Indians at almost any time and that's the one thing we don't want to happen."

Deerfoot still leading the way, they turned due west from the course they had been following. They continued in this direction for about three miles and then they once more turned and

rode parallel with their original course. Black Hawk was evidently following the same trail over which the four scouts had come on their way from Dixon's Ferry the day previous.

"Where do you suppose he is going?" asked Robert, speaking in reference to Black Hawk. He was always uppermost in men's minds in those days.

"He is headed straight for Kellogg's Grove," replied John Mason.

"Do you suppose he will attack there?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mason. "If he does I hope he has no better luck than he had yesterday."

"There are no soldiers to speak of at Kellogg's Grove," Joseph reminded the others. "He may be able to surprise the fort now and capture it."

"There were no soldiers there yesterday," agreed Mason. "At the same time it seems to me I heard something at Dixon's Ferry the other day about some men being sent there."

"To be stationed there, you mean?" asked Robert.

"No, I don't think that was it. I can't remember just what it was, but somehow I have

it in my mind that that spy battalion under Major Dement was to be sent over to this part of the country somewhere. They may not be at Kellogg's Grove itself, but they ought to be around here, some place."

"Maybe they'll meet Black Hawk's war party coming the other way," exclaimed Robert excitedly. "I wish we could be with them."

"It seems to me you are always looking for trouble," said John Mason, smiling broadly at the eagerness of the red-headed young frontiersman.

"Well, it has to come some time," explained Robert. "These Indians simply have to be beaten before the war can end. The sooner it is over with the better it will be. That's the way I look at it."

"That's very true," agreed Mason. "You don't have to be in it though, do you?"

"Of course I do," Robert insisted. "I want to feel that I had a part in winning the war. You must also remember that Joe and I have an account to settle with Mr. Black Hawk."

Mason had no answer to this remark and as no one else offered to say anything the ride was continued in silence for some time. Over the

rolling prairies they went, the scenery sometimes varied by a grove of trees or a patch of woods. Mile after mile they covered and no trace of the enemy appeared. Deerfoot evidently knew the country thoroughly, for when they had gone a certain distance he turned abruptly east.

"Kellogg Grove there," he exclaimed pointing ahead of him as he spoke.

It had been decided that a halt should be made there on the way back just as had been done on the outcoming journey.

"Good!" cried Joseph heartily, in response to Deerfoot's remark. "I feel hungry and know I shall appreciate a little food."

"We all will, I guess," agreed Mason. "How far are we from Kellogg's Grove now, Deerfoot?"

"Two mile."

"That won't take long," exclaimed Robert. "By the way," he added suddenly, and speaking to Mason, "what has become of Walt?"

"Why, I don't know," replied Mason. "I left him over at Fort Armstrong some time ago. I forget where he was going. It seems to me he was to join Major Dement's battalion, though."

"That's the one sent over here," Joseph remarked.

"Why, to be sure it is," exclaimed Mason. "Perhaps if we run into them we may find Walt. I'd like to see him again."

"So should I," agreed Robert. "We used to get pretty mad at him once in a while but just the same I like him. Don't you, Joe?"

"Surely I do," said Joseph heartily. "I hope we'll meet him soon again."

"There's Kellogg's Grove now," cried Mason suddenly.

"Does it look as if anyone was there?" asked Joseph.

"I can't see," replied Mason. "Is anyone there, Deerfoot?"

"Yes, plenty people," said Deerfoot. "Many white soldier."

"It must be Major Dement's command," cried Mason. "At any rate we'll know soon."

The four volunteers unconsciously quickened their pace, and in a short time arrived at their destination to find that John Mason's guess was correct. Major Dement was there with a spy battalion of about one hundred and fifty men.

CHAPTER XXIV

KELLOGG'S GROVE

AS they rode up to the fort the first person to greet them was Walt. He had seen them coming a long way off and hastened out to meet his four friends. He was delighted to see them again and showed his pleasure plainly.

"You're just in time to see some fun, I think," he remarked after a few moments had elapsed and the travelers had dismounted from their ponies.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Robert eagerly. He at once scented action and was enthusiastic at the prospect.

"Two men came in just a few minutes ago and reported that they had seen some Indians about four or five miles from here."

"Are we going after them?" demanded Robert.

"I can't say as to that," replied Walt. "You'll have to ask Major Dement."

"You said you were hungry a little while ago, Bob," Joseph reminded his brother.

"I know, but I've forgotten about that. When there is a chance of a fight I never feel like eating."

"We'd better get something just the same," said John Mason. "No man can fight on an empty stomach. Ask any general and he'll tell you that."

"You can get food right inside here," said Walt. "Follow me and I'll fix you up."

No second invitation was needed and the four scouts had soon disposed of a hearty meal. Walt had left them to eat by themselves but just as they were finishing he came hurrying up with an air of satisfaction to the place where they were seated.

"If you are looking for a fight you can find one now," he exclaimed to Robert.

"I'm ready," cried Robert, immediately rising to his feet. "Where is it?"

"Major Dement is calling for twenty-five volunteers to go out and reconnoiter. Do you want to go?"

"Of course I do," said Robert instantly. "Where is Major Dement?"

"Over there," replied Walt, pointing to a man who was standing in the midst of a group of soldiers.

"I'm with you, Bob," exclaimed Joseph, and he, too, started forward.

"Me go," said Deerfoot quickly and he followed Joseph.

"It looks as though I'd have to go or be left alone," laughed Mason. "How about you, Walt?"

"I've already volunteered and been accepted."

Before many minutes had elapsed John Mason, Deerfoot, and the two young brothers had also been accepted as members of the party. The little band soon sallied forth from the blockhouse and started across the prairie. Joseph noticed that among the twenty-five men who had volunteered there was a large proportion of officers. He called Walt's attention to this fact.

"I noticed it, too," said Walt. "I don't think it is right, either."

"Nor I," exclaimed Joseph. "Major Dement isn't with us but there are mighty few officers

left in the fort. I'm afraid that if anything serious happens, there may be trouble. The men aren't well drilled, and, without enough officers, I'm afraid they may become disorganized if they are left back there practically to themselves."

"Let's hope not," said Walt earnestly. "The militia has acquired a pretty bad reputation so far, but these men look like better fighters than the ones Major Stillman had at Sycamore Creek.

"They couldn't be worse any way," exclaimed Joseph disgustedly.

Walt and Joseph were riding in the rear rank of the party. They were scarcely out of sight of their camp now, but a sudden yell warned them that already the enemy had been discovered. Far out on the prairies appeared a small grove and between this and the fort were three Indians riding backward and forward.

The reconnoitering party started after them at full speed and were soon strung out in a long line across the prairie. The three Indians immediately upon sighting the white men, turned and rode for the grove as fast as their horses could carry them. Joseph had started from

the rear but thanks to the speed of The Swallow was soon up with the leaders. Robert had been in the van from the start and Deerfoot and Mason were with him.

In the meantime Major Dement had been observing his party of scouts from a vantage point he occupied near the fort. He saw all that was happening and he immediately suspected a trick. The three Indians were racing straight for the grove and he feared that concealed there were reinforcements, who were merely waiting for the little band to ride into the trap set for them. The Major at once jumped upon his horse and with a small portion of his men set out to overtake the scouts and warn them of their danger.

He was well mounted and before a great distance had been covered was able to come up with the hindermost members of the band. Several men, however, were so far in advance in their mad pursuit of the Indians that he was unable to reach them in time. Among this number were Robert, Joseph, Deerfoot and Walt. The calls and shouts of their comrades did not reach their ears and on they raced. The fleeing Indians were making for the grove some

three miles distant, hotly pursued by the Major's men.

When they were a little less than a half-mile from the grove Major Dement dismounted his men and formed them in a line. Seven or eight were still in advance, however, intent only upon overtaking the Indians. Joseph now led the pursuit, with Walt close behind him. Then came four men who were of Major Dement's original command and bringing up the rear rode Robert and Deerfoot. The last two mentioned were in that position solely on account of the speed of their horses. Certainly Robert would have led the party if he had had his wish.

Nearer and nearer to the grove they came. On they kept without the least suspicion of the danger to which they were exposing themselves. Major Dement had drawn up the men who had dismounted on a little ridge, and with intense anxiety they watched their comrades approach the grove.

Suddenly it happened as the Major had feared. From out the shelter of the grove poured the Indians. They were all mounted, stripped to their waists and painted for battle.

A galling fire poured from their guns and two of the white men fell to the ground lifeless. One of these two was Walt. The bullet had entered his temple and one glance was sufficient to assure Joseph that his companion was dead.

He turned and fled, and with him fled the five remaining members of the daring little company. A volley from the men on the ridge killed two or three of the Indians, but the rest came on at undiminished speed. As they reached the bodies of the two dead soldiers a large number surrounded them, clubbing and stabbing the lifeless remains. By the time that Joseph and his five companions reached the ridge where their comrades were drawn up in line the red men were close upon them and upon both flanks.

The Indians had sallied forth with terrific yells which had been heard by the soldiers remaining at the fort. This portion of the battalion had been ordered to hold themselves in readiness for any emergency, but at the sound of the guns and the war whoops they mounted their horses and started to the rescue of their companions. Coming nearer, however, they met Major Dement and his men fleeing in hot haste, and upon seeing the number of the In-

dians they, too, turned and retreated toward the fort.

A mad race ensued in which the Whites were victors by a narrow margin. They were first to reach the blockhouse, however, and springing from their horses they quickly occupied the defenses. It was necessary to leave their mounts outside and the horses were huddled together around a work bench on the least exposed side of the fort. The best marksmen immediately took their places at the portholes.

An ominous stillness filled the air. In large force the Indians swarmed around the blockhouse. They kept under cover as far as possible, however, and seemed to be planning the best method of attack. All at once the sharp crack of a rifle broke the silence and proved that someone of the white men had located the enemy. Straightway the firing became general.

"Let 'em have it, Joe!" exclaimed Robert hotly. "We've got Walt to pay them back for now, too."

"I'll let 'em have it all right," replied Joseph grimly. He carefully sighted his rifle and fired. An Indian some two hundred yards away who

had been so careless as to expose his head for an instant, suddenly let his gun drop limply from his hands and sank to the ground.

"I got one," said Joseph casually.

"Good for you!" cried Robert exultantly. "That's what we're here for."

"Me get one, too," remarked Deerfoot. He was busily engaged in loading his gun for another shot at his ancient enemies.

"I hope we all get one," exclaimed Robert. "At least I hope we all get at least one." He bent to his task again and no further conversation was held for some time.

The little garrison kept up a hot fire. No Indians dared venture too close to the fort and after about an hour had elapsed they turned their attention to the horses. Robert, whose porthole commanded a view of the spot where the animals were huddled, was the first to observe this move.

"They're shooting at the horses," he exclaimed suddenly.

"What!" cried Joseph in alarm.

"They're shooting at the horses," repeated Robert. "I suppose they are beginning to find out that they can't hurt us here in the fort."

"But The Swallow!" protested Joseph. "Suppose they kill him. Can you see him from there?"

"Yes," said Robert, peering out cautiously. "He's almost in the center of the bunch and my horse is right next to him. I can see John Mason's horse, too, but I don't see Deerfoot's anywhere."

"Let me look," begged Joseph. The thought of harm coming to The Swallow cast a sudden gloom over the young volunteer. He almost forgot his own danger in the thought that he might lose his wonderful pony. He was prouder of The Swallow than of anything else in his possession and the thought of being deprived of his prize was almost more than he could bear.

"He is right in the middle there," he observed after a hasty glance. As he looked, however, a bullet struck a tall sorrel horse stationed on the edge of the group and with a scream of pain the animal reared and plunged. The rest of the animals tugged at their bonds and wild with fear made every effort to break loose. Joseph was beside himself with anxiety.

"They won't hit him," observed Robert re-

assuringly. "There are a hundred horses in that bunch and The Swallow is about the best protected one of all. He was the first to arrive so that all the others are grouped around him and help to keep him covered."

"If they shoot him I'll kill every Indian Black Hawk has!" exclaimed Joseph fiercely. "That would be the last straw."

"Kill 'em all anyway," urged Robert. "That's our business just now and at present we're not attending to it."

As Joseph turned away to resume his post another bullet struck in the midst of the group of horses. The animal collapsed almost instantly and once more all the others were thrown into confusion. It was a horrible sight to see the poor dumb brutes, almost crazy with fright, and yet unable to do one thing to help themselves. They kicked and reared and plunged and many of them were hurt. The Indians were quick to observe the damage they were inflicting and soon much of their fire was concentrated on the horses. Already ten animals had been shot.

"Quite a large number of Indians have been killed I think," remarked John Mason to Jo-

seph when he resumed his place at his porthole.

"Think they'll last much longer?"

"No, I don't. The very fact that they have turned their attention to the horses shows that they haven't much hope of taking the block-house."

"I wish they'd leave soon," exclaimed Joseph. "I'm afraid they're going to shoot The Swallow unless they stop firing at the horses pretty quick."

"The only way you can stop them is to make it so hot for them they'll have to leave," observed Mason.

"I might go out and bring him inside," said Joseph eagerly. "Do you think I could get him out of that bunch of horses?"

"No, I don't," replied Mason shortly. "As long as I have an ounce of strength left in my body, I'll use it to prevent you from doing anything so foolish, too."

"Look there," cried Robert suddenly. He hurried up to the spot where Joseph and John Mason were, and pointed eagerly out of one of the portholes.

CHAPTER XXV

ON THE TRAIL

THERE they go!" exclaimed Robert triumphantly. "They've had enough."

"So have I," cried Joseph, with a great sigh of relief. "I thought that at any moment The Swallow was going to be shot."

"He has run that chance ever since you've had him," remarked Mason. "Every time you've been in a fight your horse has been in danger of being killed."

"I know it," said Joseph. "At the same time they haven't been turning all their attention to him."

"They're going now, anyway," remarked Robert. "We've made it too hot for them, I guess. We seem to be pretty good men to defend blockhouses, don't we? What do you say to our hiring ourselves out for that purpose all along the frontier?"

"You'd better clear them out of this neighborhood before you start in anywhere else, Red," cautioned Mason.

"They are clearing out of here now," replied Robert. "Just look out of that porthole and you can see them going."

What Robert said was true. Black Hawk had drawn off his forces and could now be seen leading his warriors in retreat across the prairie. His attempt to take the blockhouse had resulted in absolute failure, but five white men were dead as a result of his visit. One of the five was Walt and his loss was keenly felt by his companions.

"Poor old Walt," exclaimed Joseph sorrowfully. "I'm sorry he had to go."

"He died a soldier's death, though," said Robert. "I'd like to get a shot at the Indian that killed him; also at those demons who stabbed and mutilated the bodies out there on the prairie."

"Look here, boys," observed John Mason quietly. "There is no use in talking about unpleasant subjects. No one feels the loss of Walt more than I. He was a good friend of mine and I had known him for years. He died

bravely but his death was only a part of the game after all. I wish he was back, but wishing won't bring him. Talking and thinking won't do any good either and I say we try to forget about it. It seems to me that is the most sensible thing for us to do."

"I guess you're right," agreed Joseph. "It makes one feel badly, though."

"Of course it does," said Mason. "There is work for us to do just now, though, and because we try to forget Walt's loss doesn't mean that we don't feel badly."

So Walt died and passed out of the lives of his comrades. He had his faults like all of us, but he had had many good points as well. We are all doomed to be forgotten, but if we can make the world and the people in it a little bit better or happier for our having lived here, we can count our lives successful. All who knew Walt agreed that his had been a successful life.

That evening General Posey arrived at Kellogg's Grove with his brigade. Scouts reported that Black Hawk's party were encamped only a short distance away, but for some reason it was not deemed advisable to attack him.

"It seems silly to me," exclaimed Robert

hotly. "Here we have a lot of reinforcements and a fine chance to strike a heavy blow. The Indians are probably all tired out after their fight and we might even be able to capture Black Hawk himself. It seems to me an opportunity to break the back of the war right now."

"You may be right," admitted Joseph. "At the same time you must remember that these men probably know more about fighting than we do, and we are in no position to criticize."

"Maybe so," growled Robert. "I must say it doesn't seem like good sense to me, though."

No attack was made, however, and a few days later the two brothers, together with John Mason and the faithful Deerfoot were once more at Dixon's Ferry. They were now attached to the spy battalion of General James D. Henry's brigade. General Henry had been lieutenant-colonel of Fry's rangers when the four friends had first attached themselves to that body after Major Stillman's defeat. Colonel Fry still held command of the spy battalion, however.

Since the defeat at Sycamore Creek a large army had been gathered by the Whites who were determined to end the war as soon as possible. Including the regulars there were now about

four thousand effective troops in the field. Most of these had assembled at Fort Wilburn, on the Illinois River, south of Dixon's Ferry. One brigade under General Alexander was dispatched post haste to Plum River, a spot not far from Kellogg's Grove, as soon as news of the fight at the latter place was received. It was thought that Black Hawk might attempt to cross the Mississippi at this point and it was Alexander's mission to prevent this.

Black Hawk did not try to cross the great river just then, however. Instead he turned north once more and went into camp near Lake Koshkonong near the head waters of the Rock River. Learning of this, General Atkinson at once left Dixon's Ferry and advanced up the east bank of the Rock River in pursuit of the Indians. The start was made on June twenty-seventh, the main army now consisting of four hundred regulars and twenty-one hundred volunteer troops.

"We're off," cried Robert enthusiastically, as the army filed out of the little settlement at Dixon's Ferry and started up the bank of the river. "We'll finish up the war this time. Just look at all the men we have."

"It does look like a real army, doesn't it?" exclaimed Joseph.

Like some great serpent the army filed out of Dixon's Ferry. The two brothers being attached to the scout battalion were near the front, and in back of them the troops stretched out in a long line as far as the eye could see. There was little of the bravado and recklessness that had inspired Major Stillman's men when they had started from this same spot some six weeks before. Bitter and costly experience had taught the men that over-confidence is a poor quality for any soldier to possess. A quiet determination showed on every countenance now. This army had made up its mind to win and Black Hawk would soon realize that every member meant business.

Behind the troops came the baggage and supply wagons. A mass of dust from the hoofs of hundreds of horses rose in a cloud about the army and only an occasional glimpse of the baggage train could be had. Every once in a while the cloud lifted momentarily, however, and the drivers could be seen urging their horses on to keep pace with the others.

"Where's Deerfoot?" exclaimed Robert sud-

denly. "I haven't seen him once since yesterday."

"You don't mean to say you don't know where he is?" said Joseph in surprise.

"No. I've been so busy the last twenty-four hours that I never missed him. I just this minute noticed that he was gone."

"Deerfoot is the proudest Indian in North America today, I guess," laughed John Mason, who rode alongside his young friends.

"Why?" demanded Robert. "Tell me what all the mystery is about."

"There's no mystery at all," replied Joseph. "This is what happened. Yesterday a Pottowattomie came into camp and reported that seventy-five warriors of his tribe were encamped at Sycamore Creek who wanted to join forces with us. They seemed to think that this was a fine chance to get revenge on their old enemies, the Sacs, and they were very anxious to get in the fight. Some men of our battalion were sent on ahead to tell them it was all right and Deerfoot of course went with them. You ought to have seen him. Why, he was almost enthusiastic."

"You can't tell me he showed it, though,"

laughed Robert. "When are we going to meet these Pottowattomies?"

"Tonight, I think."

"That's fine," exclaimed Robert heartily. "I can just see Deerfoot riding at the head of seventy-five of his own people. He'll be so puffed up that he probably won't deign to speak to us."

"Not as bad as that I think," said Joseph laughingly. "They'll be a great addition to our forces, though. They know the country better than any of our men and they are good fighters, too."

"They are if they are anything like Deerfoot," agreed Mason. "He is about the best I ever saw."

All day long the army continued its march. A halt for dinner was made at noon and shortly afterward the advance was continued. No sign of the enemy was discovered and at night they went into camp on the old battle ground at Sycamore Creek. Shortly before, they had passed the ravine where Joseph had hidden from the Indians during the disastrous route after that fight. He also recognized the spot where he had had the encounter with the Indian

and had captured The Swallow. A thrill ran up and down his spine at the remembrance of these events and he shuddered to think how easily the tide might have turned the other way and his life been forfeited as had Walt's only a few days before.

Camp was pitched in a heavy growth of timber and breastworks thrown up. Sentinels were posted and every precaution taken against a surprise attack.

Soon after the army's arrival Deerfoot came in with his seventy-five tribesmen. They were given a hearty welcome by the troops and were assigned to Colonel Fry's brigade. Thus the scout battalion, of which John Mason and Joseph and Robert were members, now contained not only one fearless Indian ally, but seventy-five more of the same kind. Deerfoot, in spite of the fact that many of his own people were now with the army, still chose to camp with his two young white friends.

"Wouldn't you rather be with the rest of your people?" Joseph inquired of him. He thought that perhaps Deerfoot had joined him and his brother for fear they might feel hurt.

"Me stay with you," replied Deerfoot quietly.

No urging could induce him to leave, and Joseph and Robert soon gave up trying.

"I believe he'd rather be with you boys than his own people anyway," John Mason remarked to Joseph a short time later.

"I guess he would," agreed Joseph. "He is certainly a good friend of ours. He is a fine character, too, and I can tell you that Bob and I appreciate his affection."

The next day the march was continued. On the thirtieth they crossed the Illinois-Wisconsin border where the Turtle village of the Winnebagos stood. The place was deserted, however, for the inhabitants had fled at the approach of the army.

Sac signs were fresh now, for Black Hawk had fled from Kellogg's Grove directly for his stronghold, reaching the Rock River just above the mouth of the Kishwaukee only three or four days in advance of the White army. The trail was warm and the troops were following it with the determination and eagerness of bloodhounds.

Every night a camp was selected, in the timber if possible, and the men slept on their arms. There was constant fear of a night attack, for

so close had General Atkinson pressed the fleeing Sacs that often they came in contact with the rear guard of the savages. Several times sentinels had been fired on.

On the second of July the army arrived at the outlet of Lake Koshkonong. Indian camps were found, all presenting the appearance of having been hastily deserted. Tepees stood empty and household goods had been abandoned by the Indians in their eagerness to leave.

"Look there," exclaimed Robert as he and some of the scouts rode into the largest of these camps.

Hanging from a pole of one of the tepees were five newly taken scalps. White scalps they were which had been stretched on frames to dry.

"All I can say is," remarked one grizzled old ranger, "that them Indians must have been in a powerful big hurry or they never would have left them things behind."

"We'll catch up with them soon," cried Robert eagerly. "It can't be too soon to suit me either."

CHAPTER XXVI

THROUGH THE SWAMPS

ROBERT had maintained that they would soon overtake Black Hawk, but such did not prove to be the case. Winnebagos had come into camp with information that they knew where Black Hawk was located and their offers to guide the troops to the spot had been accepted. As a consequence many days were wasted in running wild goose chases through the treacherous swamps and sink holes of that region. The Winnebagos had been constantly endeavoring to lead the army into a trap and only their good fortune had saved them from destruction more than once.

"I'm getting discouraged," exclaimed Robert in despair. A week had been spent in following false clues, none of which had proved of any value.

"Don't get discouraged, Red," urged John Mason. "Better times are coming."

"Maybe they are," replied Robert disconsolately. "Not many seem to think so, though. Governor Reynolds left us this morning."

"He did?"

"Yes, he did, and a lot of other officials went with him. They think that the Indians have taken to the swamps and that we'll never get them out."

"I don't think it's as bad as that."

"But so many of our men are sick," protested Robert. "This business of floundering around in the marshes isn't very healthy, you know. We are almost out of provisions, too."

"That's the worst thing," admitted Mason reluctantly. "Our food supply is low, I guess."

"It certainly is, from all I hear. Something will have to be done soon."

As he finished speaking Joseph approached. He hurried along as if he had some important news to communicate.

"What is it, Joe?" inquired Robert as his brother drew near.

"We're going to Fort Winnebago," Joseph announced.

"To Fort Winnebago?" exclaimed John Mason. "Why are we going there?"

"To get supplies."

"Who is going?" demanded Robert, his spirits immediately reviving at the prospect of an expedition.

"Our brigade and General Alexander's, and Dodge's squadron."

"When do we start?"

"In an hour."

"Good," exclaimed Robert. "How about Deerfoot? Is he going with us?"

"Yes, indeed. I just arranged it for him. He thought he might be left behind and he couldn't stand the thought of being separated from us."

"How far is it to Fort Winnebago from here?" Joseph inquired of John Mason.

"Nearly eighty miles, I should say."

"What do we care?" cried Robert. "We're going to leave this hole and that is enough to make me cheerful again."

"You'll strike worse holes than this on the way to Fort Winnebago," cautioned Mason. "We may all wish we were back here again before many days have passed."

"It's a change anyway," Robert persisted. "That is the principal thing just at present."

An hour later the start for Fort Winnebago was made. The journey was a hard one and it was with a great feeling of relief that the troops finally reached their destination. At the fort were many Winnebago Indians who were eager to give advice to the white chiefs.

"No trust them," said Deerfoot earnestly in speaking of these offers. "They fool white men too much already."

"I wouldn't trust them either," exclaimed Robert hotly. "It seems to me we ought to know better by this time."

The four scouts were seated together at one end of the enclosure discussing the future plans of the army. They were tired from their long trip and as a consequence were low in spirits. The rest of the men seemed to share their feelings and many were anxious to give up the struggle and go home.

"I don't want to go home," said Robert warmly. "What I want to do is to find Black Hawk, and find him soon too. I can't help but think that there is some way to do it."

"If we only had a trustworthy guide," said

John Mason. "Some man who knows what he is talking about and whose word can be relied upon."

"But where can we find such a man?" demanded Joseph.

"I wish I knew," exclaimed Mason.

"We can get supplies here," remarked Joseph. "That is some consolation anyway."

"Yes, but a pretty poor one," growled Robert. "What we want is Black Hawk, not supplies."

"We must have supplies first though, Red," reminded Mason. "Don't you know what I told you the other day that no man can fight on an empty stomach?"

"Nor without sleep either," added Joseph. "I'm going to bed."

The fifteenth of July came and the troops left Fort Winnebago. General Alexander's men insisted upon returning by the shortest possible route to General Atkinson and the main army. Consequently they set out with twelve days' provisions. Henry and Dodge, however, had received a clue as to Black Hawk's whereabouts and decided to follow it.

At Fort Winnebago there was a famous half-

breed trader and scout named Pierre Paquette. He had long been a trusted employee of the American Fur Company and to all appearances answered John Mason's requirements of a man whose word could be relied upon and who knew what he was talking about. Paquette had informed General Henry of the true location of Black Hawk's camp and with a dozen Winnebago assistants was engaged to lead the army there.

On July eighteenth they reached the village where Black Hawk and his band had been quartered, but the enemy had fled. The Winnebago guides insisted, however, that the Sacs had just gone to Cranberry Lake, a half-day's march up the Rock River. It was then noon and the commanders decided to wait until the following morning before proceeding. Camp was made and the men settled down to wait until the next day came.

Meanwhile two men, Adjutants Merriam and Woodbridge, were dispatched to the south to carry the news to General Atkinson. Little Thunder, a Winnebago chief, went with them to act as guide. Mounting their horses they rode off, leaving behind them seven hundred

and fifty very much disheartened and discouraged troops.

"There's nothing to do but wait till morning, I suppose," exclaimed Robert peevishly. "It seems as if we spent half our time in waiting."

"You must be patient, Red," advised John Mason. "Surely you wouldn't have us start for Cranberry Lake now. Why, we'd just about arrive there as it was growing dark; the Indians would discover us and get away again. They could easily escape us in the darkness."

"That's right, Bob," agreed Joseph. "I think we are doing just the right thing."

"Probably we are," admitted Robert. "I guess I'm in too much of a hurry. Besides I don't like this business of having nothing to do."

"Why don't you look after your horse?" suggested Joseph. "I'm going to give The Swallow a good rub down this afternoon."

"That's a good scheme," exclaimed Mason. "Come on, Red. Come on, Deerfoot. We'll all go and do as Joe advises."

The four friends were soon busied with their horses, and being busy the afternoon soon passed. Darkness approached by the time they had finished and soon after supper they rolled

themselves in their blankets and prepared for sleep.

To the four tired volunteers it seemed as if scarcely a half-hour had elapsed when they were suddenly aroused from their slumbers. The camp seemed to be in an uproar. Men ran hither and thither. Loud commands were being shouted and all was bustle and noise.

"What is it?" exclaimed Robert. "Are we being attacked?"

"I don't know," replied his brother hastily. "I guess not though, for I don't hear any guns. Let's see what it is all about."

Together with John Mason and Deerfoot they hastened to headquarters.

"What's all the excitement?" Robert inquired eagerly of the first man they met.

"We've found him at last," the man answered gleefully.

"Found who? What do you mean?" demanded Mason.

"Is Black Hawk captured?" exclaimed Robert.

"Here's what has happened," said the man quietly. "You know that Merriam and Woodbridge started for General Atkinson's camp

with Little Thunder as a guide. Well, when they had covered about twenty miles of the distance they suddenly came upon a broad fresh trail leading west. Little Thunder at once began to wave his arms and shout, but the two adjutants couldn't understand a word of what he said. Suddenly, however, he turned his horse around and started at full speed back over the way he had come. Woodbridge and Merriam were afraid to go any farther without a guide, so they had to follow Little Thunder. They all got back here just a little while ago, and it seems that they just happened to stumble across Black Hawk's trail."

"Are we going to follow it as fast as we can?" said Robert.

"Exactly," agreed the man. "We start very soon."

"Hooray!" cried Robert, turning a full handspring to show his approval of this move.

"We must get our horses and be ready to start at once," reminded Mason. "Let's waste no time."

The news that the trail of Black Hawk had been discovered was received with great joy in the camp. The men were all eager to start

and with rapidly rising spirits they awaited the order to move. More enthusiasm was shown by the troops than they had displayed at any time up to the present. If it was fighting and danger they wanted there would be no cause for their enthusiasm to lag again either. At last the preparations had been all made and General Henry drew his men up in order to address a few words of advice to them.

"We have at last struck the right track," he said. "The trail is fresh and we must follow it like hounds on the scent. We have reason to believe that our enemies are sorely pressed for food. That fact will help us, but we must take quick advantage of it. We must strike before Black Hawk can secure supplies and consequently our watchword must be 'speed.' We must sacrifice everything to speed and to that end I charge you men to discard every article that is not absolutely essential to you. We must not be weighted down with unnecessary baggage. I have confidence in you all and I know that every man can be counted on to the utmost."

This speech of General Henry's was greeted with wild cheering and every man immediately

did as he had been advised. Blankets, cooking utensils, and all sorts and kinds of camp equippage were thrown aside. Ammunition and a scanty supply of food was all that the men retained.

The word to advance was given and the army moved forward. What had been a band of discouraged and gloomy men was now a body of spirited and eager soldiers. Every man realized that at last they were not following a will-o'-the-wisp, but a certainty. They knew that Black Hawk was not far away now and that if they tried hard enough they could probably overtake him. They were all determined to do their utmost.

"What an awful country!" exclaimed Robert, when they were a few miles out from camp. "Is the whole region filled with swamps and sink holes like this?"

"Pretty much so, I'm afraid," replied Mason. "It makes the traveling pretty hard, doesn't it?"

"I should say so," agreed Joseph. "The men don't seem to mind it though. Just look at them! They look like a lot of schoolboys out for a picnic."

"They're on the trail of big game now," said Mason. "Nothing else matters. We cannot be so far away from it, either," he added. "Just look there."

CHAPTER XXVII

WISCONSIN HEIGHTS

THE object to which John Mason pointed was not very startling in itself. It seemed entirely harmless and innocent as it lay on a tuft of grass beside a large tree. It was an earthen pot like many that were used by the Indians in their camps.

"You see they are beginning to throw away their own belongings," exclaimed Mason. "They must know we are close behind them and are trying to make time."

"There are some blankets too," cried Robert. "They evidently don't intend to carry any more weight than necessary."

The trail was soon littered with baggage and paraphernalia of all kinds. Everything pointed to the fact that the Indians were now in dire straits. The troops pushed on eagerly, every

man spurred forward by the knowledge that their opponents were weakened and must soon be overtaken. Nature seemed to impose almost every difficulty imaginable in the way of the pursuers, but nothing discouraged the men any more. Frequently it became necessary to dismount and wade in mud and water shoulder deep. A violent thunder storm and cloudburst struck the little army, but undismayed they fought their way along.

"There's an Indian!" exclaimed Joseph suddenly.

"Where?" cried Robert excitedly. The two boys were in advance of the others, for their knowledge of woodcraft learned from Deerfoot had enabled them slightly to outdistance the rest of the army.

"Just ahead there," said Joseph quickly as he raised his gun to fire.

"Wait, Joe," cried Robert. "He's holding up his hands."

The Indian was seated on a pony, and, as Robert had said, was holding up his hands in token of surrender. Joseph quickly lowered his rifle.

"A Winnebago," announced Joseph, when he

had obtained a closer glimpse of the red man.

"We'd better wait for the others," advised Robert. "He probably can't speak English and we can't find out what he wants."

Several soldiers soon joined the brothers, among them a man who understood the Winnebago tongue. He shouted to the Indian and learned that he was a deserter from Black Hawk and wished to join the Whites. The interpreter questioned him closely and upon relating what had been said to General Henry, the Winnebago was given permission to attach himself to the army.

"Who was he? What did he say?" Robert demanded of Deerfoot, who was now riding with the two boys and John Mason.

"He Winnebago," replied Deerfoot. "He say Black Hawk only two miles away, and much weary."

"Hooray!" cried Robert excitedly. "We'll catch him soon."

The news had spread throughout the army, spurring the men on to even greater efforts than before.

"We won't catch them tonight, I'm afraid," remarked Mason. "It will be dark before long."

"It always gets dark just at the wrong time," Robert complained.

"How are you going to prevent it, Red?" laughed Mason.

"I'm not going to prevent it," replied Robert. "It is certainly tough luck the way it always happens like this, though."

"We'll camp soon, I think," said Mason. "We must be almost at the lakes by this time, and it is nearly sunset."

"What lakes?" inquired Joseph.

"The Four Lakes," explained Mason. "You'll see them yourself in a minute."

"I hope they're better looking than the rest of this country," exclaimed Robert.

"Don't worry about that," Mason assured him. "You'll never see anything prettier than these lakes as long as you live."

As he finished speaking they emerged from the swamp, passed through a belt of heavy timber and came to the edge of a lake. The water was clear as crystal and the bottom was covered with shining white pebbles.

"This is Third Lake," announced Mason. "What do you think of it?"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Robert and Joseph

in amazement as they looked out across the beautiful sheet of water. The sun was sinking low in the western sky and its rays cast a gleam of silver and gold over the quiet waters. As the rest of the army came up, every man stood in silence and looked out over the lake, almost too strongly impressed to speak.

"How big is this lake?" inquired Robert at last.

"About ten miles around, I should say. Fourth Lake is about twice the size."

War and strife were forgotten for a few moments under the spell of this beautiful scene. The silence did not long continue, however, for the order to camp here for the night was soon given and preparations were made at once. Scouts came in and reported Indians but a few miles away, but nothing happened to disturb the encampment during the night. The next morning at daybreak the men were up and once more on the march.

Across the isthmus between Third and Fourth Lakes swept the army. Joseph, Robert, Mason and Deerfoot rode in front with Ewing's spy battalion and soon picked up the trail. It was easy to follow and more and more evidences of

the desperation of the Sacs came into view. Apparently the Indians were discarding everything but their firearms.

In desperate haste the army advanced. Several horses gave out, but the troopers thus deprived of their mounts kept on on foot, not one whit discouraged by their mishaps.

Several Indians were shot. They were all old men who were exhausted by hunger and unable to keep pace with the rest of their band. The morning passed and noon came. With undiminished speed the army pressed forward. At about half-past four in the afternoon the Indians were sighted. They had taken up their position on the bluffs about a mile and a half from the Wisconsin River.

"Halt!" came the sharp command. "Dismount!" A moment later the army was on foot, awaiting the next order. This soon came, and the men were instructed to form in line and prepare to charge. One man out of every four was delegated to hold the horses.

Scarcely had the army time to do as they were commanded when the Sacs themselves charged. Yelling like madmen they rushed down upon the Whites. A heavy volley from

their guns failed to break the lines of the troops, however, and the fire was returned spiritedly.

"Let 'em have it! Give it to them!" cried Robert enthusiastically.

"Charge!" came the order.

With a cheer the men advanced. They returned the galling fire of the Indians with deadly effect, but their foes were not lacking in valor.

"Keep low and close to me, Bob," warned Joseph as they hurried forward.

"I'm all right, Joe," cried Robert. "Forget me and give all your attention to those red demons over there."

The fire of the Whites was most effective and the Indians appeared to be giving way.

"They're running," shouted Robert. "Keep right after them."

Apparently what Robert had said was true. The Indians did seem to be leaving their positions, but they certainly were not retreating, as subsequent events soon proved.

"We've got 'em!" cried Robert, who was almost beside himself with excitement. "We've got 'em now, and now's the time to finish them up."

"Don't expose yourself too much, Red," cautioned Mason, who kept close beside the two young brothers. Robert was absolutely regardless of danger and ran forward fearlessly, with no thought other than to load and fire his rifle as many times as possible.

"They can't——"

"Look out!" cried Mason, breaking in on what Robert had started to say.

"What is it?" shouted Joseph in response to Mason's warning.

"They're trying to flank us."

"Where are they?"

As he spoke the sharp bark of several rifles sounded from some very tall grass on one side of the battlefield. The Indians who had apparently retreated, as a matter of fact had stolen around and into the grass where they opened a heavy fire on the Whites. For a moment the army was taken by surprise, but it did not last long. Quick action was needed and quick action was taken, and luckily too. Had the Indians succeeded in getting behind the Whites they could have caused enormous damage.

"Charge them!" shouted General Henry.

The command was instantly obeyed. With

bayonets bared and with cheers and shouts the white men bravely dashed forward. The troops may have displayed cowardice in some of the previous engagements of the war, but they were redeeming themselves now. Fearlessly and gallantly they rushed at top speed to dislodge the enemy from his position.

"There is no load in my gun, Bob," shouted Joseph.

"Nor in mine," echoed John Mason.

"You don't need it," cried Robert. "We'll chase 'em out of there with our fists if we haven't anything else. My gun is loaded, but I don't need it."

A galling fire greeted their advance and several of the men dropped. The volley was returned but feebly, for most of the men were in the condition of Joseph and John Mason; that is, their guns were empty. No one halted for a second, however; all increased their pace.

"I'll save my load," thought Robert to himself. "I may need it more in a few minutes than I do now."

At this moment a man on a gray horse dashed madly past him. Robert recognized the rider as Colonel Jones, one of the officers. As he

glanced up at the fearless rider a bullet struck the horse, killing it instantly. Colonel Jones was pitched headlong to the ground and Robert rushed to see if he was hurt.

"Were you hit, Colonel?" he demanded anxiously.

"Never touched me," came the quick reply, and instantly jumping to his feet the gallant officer continued the advance. "Follow me!" he shouted, and with a cheer the men closed in behind him.

Absolutely regardless of consequences, fearlessly the men charged. The grass which the Indians occupied was at least six feet tall, a fact which rendered it very difficult for the Whites to see their opponents. Not one man faltered, however.

Soon they came to the edge of the grass and a desperate hand to hand encounter took place. Stabbing with their bayonets and using the butt ends of their guns the white soldiers slowly but surely forced their red-skinned foes to fall back. Every inch of ground was contested stubbornly and desperately. The men became separated from one another and individual combats took place everywhere.

"Every inch of ground was contested stubbornly and desperately."

Robert had forced his way clear through to the opposite side of the high grass and emerged into the open. As he came out he saw a white man suddenly trip and fall headlong to the ground. With a howl of rage a painted warrior sprang at the fallen soldier with upraised tomahawk.

Robert's heart almost stopped beating when he suddenly recognized the prostrate man as his brother Joseph.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TRAIL LEADS WESTWARD

THERE was not a second to lose. The Indian would surely be upon Joseph before he could raise himself from his fallen position and even should he be able to get up he would stand no chance of escape. If Joseph's life was to be saved, it was Robert who must do it. But how was it to be done? He had fired the charge which had been in his gun and he had had no chance to reload. The bloodthirsty Sac was nearer to Joseph than he, and would evidently reach the spot first. The case looked desperate.

All of this happened in the twinkling of an eye. Robert rather felt than thought these things as he saw the Indian rushing toward his helpless brother. "The only relative I have left in the world," thought Robert as, with a

choking cry, he started forward. Glory was forgotten. Bravery was forgotten. The impulsive young pioneer remembered only that his brother was in terrible and immediate danger.

The Indian was now about ten yards from Joseph, who was striving desperately to regain his feet. Robert was at least twenty yards distant. He shouted to Joseph, but Joseph had already seen the Sac approaching and was doing his utmost to get out of the way. Robert's cry did not warn him of his peril, but only served to bring a faint ray of hope into his mind that he might yet escape.

Robert saw instantly that it was out of the question for him to reach his brother before the Indian would be upon him. He stopped and started to swing his rifle about his head with some hazy idea of throwing it at his enemy. Before he could put this plan into execution, however, a strange thing occurred. Something flashed in the rays of the afternoon sun and with a cry the onrushing Indian suddenly threw up his hands and pitched forward, stumbling and tripping until he fell to the ground limp and helpless.

A tomahawk coming from some place in the tall grass had struck the Sac warrior full in the forehead and put an end to his fighting forever. So suddenly and so unexpectedly had this fortunate event taken place that neither of the two boys realized for a few moments just what had occurred. Joseph sank back upon the ground and Robert merely stood with open mouth and a dazed expression on his face, staring stupidly at the dead form of the Indian at his feet.

The mystery was not long unsolved, however. The tall grass parted and out stepped Deerfoot, as calm and stoical as ever, his face as expressionless as a statue.

"So you did it, did you?" exclaimed Robert as soon as he found his voice.

"Deerfoot!" cried Joseph and the young soldier could say no more.

The Pottowattomie paid no attention to either of the boys. He picked up his tomahawk which now was lying upon the ground, and then advanced to the spot where the body of his fallen enemy lay. Without a word he whipped out his knife and soon possessed himself of another Sac scalp. The two brothers looked on in silence.

"How can I ever thank you?" cried Joseph, walking up to Deerfoot.

"No try."

"But, Deerfoot, you saved my life," protested Joseph, tears of gratitude appearing in his eyes as he spoke.

"Why not save life?" demanded Deerfoot simply. "You my brother. Me always save brother's life." He extended his hand to Joseph, who grasped it in silence. Then the Pottowattomie turned to Robert and also shook hands with him.

This solemn rite having been performed, the three brothers turned their attention to the fight. For a time they had been oblivious to everything but their own affairs. The fight was ended, however. The Indians had been driven from their positions and now occupied a piece of rising ground overlooking the Wisconsin River.

They remained in that place only a short time, however, for the troops pursued them relentlessly. The Sacs fired a few more shots from the top of the rise and then turned and retreated swiftly down the bluffs to join the main body, which was engaged in crossing the

river. The troops soon occupied the bluffs, and further pursuit was considered useless.

Between the army and the river was a swampy bit of ground, some sixty yards wide. On the river bank was a heavy growth of timber. The white commanders seeing that the Indians could reach this protection before being overtaken decided to give up the chase for the night.

"A few more battles like that and the war will soon be over," remarked Robert enthusiastically, when camp had been pitched.

"Yes," agreed Mason. "They seem to be on the run now all right."

"I'm glad I was in it," exclaimed Robert. "It is a pleasanter sensation to be the one to do the winning than it is to have to run away. Until now we have been mostly on the defensive."

"I'm glad I was in it, too," said Joseph quietly. "I'm more than glad to be here right now though. If it hadn't been for Deerfoot I'd have been dead."

"There's no doubt of that," agreed Robert heartily. "Deerfoot," he added, "you are a hero. Get up and make a bow."

"No bow," said Deerfoot. He shifted his position uncomfortably and was much embarrassed by these remarks of Robert's. He did not desire praise for doing what he considered merely his duty.

Robert loved to tease his red brother, however, and seeing how uncomfortable his words made Deerfoot he decided to continue them.

"You must make a bow, Deerfoot," he continued. "Whenever a man saves another's life he always has to make a bow."

"No bow," protested Deerfoot, looking about for some avenue of escape.

"Of course not," exclaimed Joseph, coming to the rescue of the embarrassed Pottowattomie. "Don't pay any attention to what he says, Deerfoot."

The army turned in and soon most of the men were asleep. Everyone slept on his arms, for the region was infested with prowling Indians and no one wished to be taken unawares by a sudden attack. No incident of note occurred, however, until just about an hour and a half before the dawn of the following day. Joseph, naturally a light sleeper, awoke with a start. He had a strange feeling that someone

had been talking to him. He sat up and looked about him. The stars were out and the camp was dimly illuminated by their ghostlike light. "I must have been dreaming," thought Joseph.

Suddenly he realized that he had not been dreaming after all. A voice, loud, shrill, and speaking in an unknown tongue could be heard distinctly. The sound came from the direction of the knoll, which Black Hawk, seated on a white pony, had occupied during the battle.

"Wake up, Bob," exclaimed Joseph excitedly. He shook his brother, who was instantly wide awake and on his feet. The rest of the camp was soon aroused and a great panic ensued. The strange voice continued to be heard and nearly every man present thought it was merely a prelude to a great attack on the part of the Indians.

"What is it, do you suppose?" exclaimed Robert in alarm.

"I'm sure I can't tell you," replied Mason. "It is certainly strange."

"Let's fire a volley in that direction," cried Robert eagerly. "Perhaps if we do that it will show them we are prepared and they will be scared off."

"Don't be silly," exclaimed Joseph in alarm. "At any rate we couldn't fire without orders."

"Isn't it weird?" said Mason.

The harangue continued uninterruptedly while the army sat and quaked with fear. At any moment the men expected to be set upon by a band of bloodthirsty Sacs. Some of the more timid were in favor of decamping at once. So great was the alarm in the camp that General Henry found it necessary to deliver a patriotic speech to rally the sinking spirits of his men.

"Don't you understand what the voice is saying, Deerfoot?" inquired John Mason at last.

"Me no understand," answered Deerfoot, and in fact he was apparently just as much puzzled as all the others at the strange performance.

Suddenly the harangue ceased. For over an hour it had continued without interruption, but just before daylight the speaker stopped talking and the voice was heard no more. Until broad daylight appeared the army anxiously awaited the expected attack. It did not come, however. Scouts could discover no Indians in the neighborhood and the purpose of the harangue remained as great a mystery as ever.

On the twenty-third of July, General Henry's corps set out for Blue Mounds to secure provisions. Mason, Joseph, Robert and Deerfoot went with this detachment and arriving there that evening were joined by Generals Atkinson and Alexander. The two commanders had heard of the rapid pursuit of Black Hawk and had hastily set out from Lake Koshkonong to join the victorious army.

General Atkinson at once assumed command of all the forces collected at Blue Mounds. He distributed rations and ordered the pursuit at once to be resumed. The army departed and during the days of July twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth crossed the Wisconsin River. Rafts, made from the log houses at the deserted village of Helena, carried the army across the stream. The advance was continued and General Henry's brigade was ordered to bring up the rear in charge of the baggage.

"Why do you suppose they put us back here?" exclaimed Robert hotly. "We have done most of the fighting and this is our reward. Now if we catch up with Black Hawk again those others will have first chance and will get all the glory. We'll be left out of it almost entirely."

"You just said why it was done," remarked John Mason quietly.

"No, I asked why it was done," corrected Robert.

"You said we had done most of the fighting so far," explained Mason. "That, to my mind, is why we are stationed back here."

"What do you mean?" demanded Joseph, greatly puzzled by his friend's remark.

"Simply this: General Henry has gotten what little glory there has been to get in this war. The others are jealous of him and jealous of the way he won the battle at Wisconsin Heights. They think that the next fight will put an end to the war and they don't intend that General Henry shall get any credit for that, if they can help it."

"Is that really so?" exclaimed Robert.

"I'm sure of it," replied Mason. "I shouldn't like to be quoted as saying so, though."

"It's a pretty mean trick, I should say," cried Robert. "I hope General Henry will fool them. He has three hundred men in his brigade, and if I were in his place I'd take them and go off on my own hook. We've got enough here to defeat all Black Hawk can put in the field."

"General Henry must obey orders, Red," reminded Mason. He smiled at the boy's impetuosity, and, though he concealed it, had somewhat the same feeling that Robert had.

Five or six miles northeast of Helena the trail was discovered leading westward toward the Mississippi. The country it traversed was rugged and unfamiliar to the Whites. Their Indian guides were scarcely better acquainted with it and evidently Black Hawk had chosen this route to retard the progress of the white army and give his people more time to escape.

Great swamps loomed up before the army. Rushing rivers had to be crossed, while thickly wooded hills constantly imposed themselves between the Whites and the fleeing redskins. The trail grew constantly fresher, however, and this fact spurred the men on. Corpses of dead Sacs strewed the pathway; some had died of wounds and some of starvation. Dead ponies, the flesh partly eaten from their sides, and the half-chewed pieces of bark showed how desperately in need of food the Indians were.

On the night of August first an old Sac Indian was captured. Unable to keep pace with the main body he had been abandoned. The

army was now about ten miles from the Mississippi and from the captured Indian it was learned that Black Hawk intended to cross the great river early the following day. General Atkinson's army was nearly exhausted from its recent exertions and he decided that a few hours' rest was absolutely necessary for his men. Accordingly, a halt was called about eight o'clock of the evening of August first, and orders given to proceed at two o'clock the following morning.

At that hour the bugles sounded and the army once more was soon on the march. A grim spirit of determination filled the men and they were eager for the fray.

"I wish we were in front," complained Robert as they started out.

"Don't worry, Red," advised Mason. "I have a feeling that we'll get all the fighting we want, all right."

"Look at Deerfoot," directed Joseph in a low voice.

The Pottowattomie rode proudly forward, his head held high and a gleam in his eyes that boded ill for his enemies. His attitude reflected that of the whole army.

CHAPTER XXIX

BAD AXE

SUDDENLY shots were heard. A bugle sounded and the men realized that the deciding struggle of the war had commenced. Orders were at once given for the army to form for the attack. An orderly came riding furiously through the lines with orders from General Atkinson. Alexander and Posey with their commands formed the right wing, Dodge with his regulars the center, and General Henry the left.

The firing increased. Dense timber afforded a protection to the Sacs and hindered the operations of the army. An advance was ordered, however, and the Indians withdrew slowly. Their fire seemed to come from a wide range of ground and it was confidently believed that now the main body of Black Hawk's force had been

encountered. Upstream the Indians retreated. A proof of John Mason's remark as to the jealousy borne General Henry was provided by the commands which next were issued. The right wing and the center were ordered to pursue the savages. General Henry, however, received no orders at all and so was apparently left out of the fight entirely. This was evidently part of a plan to deprive him of any share in the honor which everyone felt was to be won in this fight.

"A mean shame!" protested John Mason hotly. "I knew they were going to try something like this all the time."

"I should say it is a shame!" cried Robert angrily. "Why should we stand for it?"

"What can we do?" queried Joseph. "We are left here with no orders. Certainly if they wanted us they would have asked us to come."

"Well then, if we have no orders why can't we go anywhere we please?" Robert protested. "I'd follow along if I were General Henry."

"We can't do that," said Mason. "I guess we're left."

Henry's brigade was stationed on the top of a bluff, not far from the river.

Sounds of firing came to the men left there and a feeling of intense rage at the affront offered them possessed everyone present. For days and weeks they had fought their way through countless difficulties and had endured untold hardships. Now that the prize was almost in their grasp they were denied any share in it.

Suddenly two men on horseback appeared, riding furiously from the direction of the river.

"Two of Ewing's spy battalion," announced Joseph, as he recognized the men. "I wonder what they want."

The horsemen at once sought General Henry and excitedly began to talk and gesticulate to him. They continually pointed toward the river in the direction whence they had come. As they finished speaking, General Henry drew his sword, waved it above his head and gave the order to advance.

"What is it? What's going on?" demanded Robert.

Many more were asking the same questions and the answers were not long in forthcoming. The spies had discovered that the main trail was farther down the river than the course of

the Indians pursued by the center and right wing. Evidently the Sacs first encountered were merely decoys who were purposely attempting to lead the army astray.

"What luck!" cried Robert joyously. "They tried to leave us out but we stumbled into the main affair after all."

Down the steep sides of the bluff General Henry led his troops. Arriving at the base, the men found themselves on a wooded plateau which stretched between the bluff and the shore. On the other side of the timber, Black Hawk was stationed.

A bullet tore some leaves from a tree close to Joseph's head. A second bullet followed the first and soon a perfect hail of lead was cutting its way through the forest. The trooper next to Deerfoot had his horse shot from under him. The bugle sounded and with a shout the men dashed forward. Over dead logs, under low hanging branches and through thick clumps of bushes they forced their way. A galling fire raked their lines from end to end but not a man faltered.

As yet no sight of the Indians appeared. That they were present was testified to, how-

ever, by the energetic fusillade they kept up. Suddenly the woods thinned and the brigade found itself in the midst of about three hundred warriors. The numbers on each side consequently were even.

Savage yells and whoops rent the air. Mixed with these were the cheers and shouts of the troops who urged one another forward. No man needed much urging, however, for everyone was there to do his duty and it was done with no thought of flinching.

"Dismount!" came the order from the bugle.

Instantly every man sprang from his horse's back, and quickly tethering his mount to some nearby tree, continued the attack on foot. Every tree seemed to shelter a hostile Indian, and the Whites themselves took advantage of every bit of cover that offered itself.

"Keep close together, boys!" urged John Mason, as, rifle in hand, he started forward with Deerfoot and the two brothers. "Watch every tree and don't let yourselves be taken by surprise."

"Look out!" warned Joseph suddenly. "There's an Indian." He pointed to a large tree in front of them and as he spoke a shaved

head appeared on one side, a rifle was quickly raised and a bullet sang close above the heads of the four troopers.

"Quick! Before he can reload!" cried Robert, and at full speed he darted forward toward the tree which sheltered their enemy.

"Follow him! Follow him!" shouted Mason. "Two on each side."

Robert was the first to reach the spot, but the Sac had fled. A movement in the bushes close at hand warned him of the Indian's presence, however, and quickly raising his rifle he fired. He saw a body fall, crashing to the ground and knew that his aim had been true.

"Bob!" shouted Joseph. "Look out! Behind you!"

Robert unconsciously dropped to the ground in response to his brother's warning. He was not a second too soon. A tomahawk whizzed over his head and buried itself deep in the trunk of a nearby tree. Robert shuddered as he realized how narrow an escape he had had. The brave who had made this attempt on his life, however, did not long escape the attention of his intended victim's companions. Three rifles spoke almost at the same instant and one

more Sac was added to those already lost by Black Hawk.

"We'd better keep under cover more," Mason advised when Robert had rejoined his comrades. "It's all right to dash out and chase Indians from behind trees but it's risky business."

"We must do it if we are going to win," protested Robert.

"Not at all," retorted Mason. "We'll drive them off all right without having to expose ourselves as much as you did."

The noise was terrific. The reports of the guns filled the air and the constant whoops of the Indians added a weird note to the din. How often the two brothers had heard the war whoop. This time, however, it was tempered by the shouts and cheers of the troops and its effect consequently was not as horrifying.

"Here comes Atkinson!" cried Joseph suddenly. The fight had been in progress for half an hour and General Henry's men were more than holding their own.

"He heard the noise," exclaimed Mason. "I'm sorry for it, too. After the way he treated General Henry he doesn't deserve to be in this at all."

"It will finish it up quicker, that's all," said Robert, who was feverishly engaged in reloading his rifle. He was intent upon doing his full share in the battle and he was fearful that he might waste a moment.

"They'll be nearly surrounded now," remarked Joseph. "This is the end of Black Hawk, I guess."

The battle now degenerated into a massacre. The Indians put up a stubborn defense until the last, but their case was hopeless. They were outnumbered and they were also weakened by lack of food. The nature of the ground was to their advantage, however. Deep ravines, old logs, swamp holes, high grass and weeds abounded, providing excellent protection to the warriors. Knowing that they were doomed they fought desperately, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

"This is too much for me," exclaimed Joseph at length.

"What's the matter, Joe?" demanded Robert.

"I can fight, but I can't slaughter people," replied Joseph with a shudder.

"I was just thinking the same thing," remarked John Mason. "I saw one of our men

shoot a wounded Indian a few minutes ago. That settles me."

"It's awful," cried Joseph. "This isn't war. It is butchery."

"They butchered us, though," Robert maintained stoutly. "Why shouldn't we give them what they gave us?"

"They don't know any better, Bob," said Mason. "They are savages, but we are supposed to be civilized, and we ought to know better, if we don't. A fair fight is one thing, but this is not fair."

"Look there!" cried Joseph. "Did you see that?"

"No, what was it?" demanded Robert.

"An Indian girl held up her hands to surrender, and somebody shot her down. Do you call that right?"

"I certainly do not," admitted Robert. "Where's Deerfoot?"

"In the thick of it, I suppose," answered Joseph. "We can't stop him, for he wouldn't understand, but we can at least keep out of it ourselves."

The three volunteers were now standing on a bluff overlooking the great river. The In-

dians were hopelessly beaten and were making desperate efforts to escape. Men, women and children were trying to swim across the river, but many were drowned and others coolly picked off by sharpshooters stationed on the bank. The sight was sickening. The ground was littered with the corpses of Indians and many of the white men were taking scalps as freely as their red enemies ever did.

"There are a whole lot of Indians on that island," cried Robert pointing to a small piece of ground covered with willows which lay not far from the shore.

"Not for long, though," said Mason grimly. "Here comes the *Warrior*."

The *Warrior* was a small steamer used to transport army supplies. On board were a few regulars and volunteers and a small cannon. The boat approached close to the island that Robert had indicated and fired round after round of canister, raking it from end to end. As if this were not enough a detachment of troops was landed on the island soon after the bombardment and with bayonets completed the destruction of the few remaining survivors.

"Do you suppose any one escaped?" asked Robert.

"From the island?" queried Mason. "Not a single soul, I'm sure."

"Do you think any Indians escaped at all?"

"I think so. Some crossed the river before we got here."

"Not many, I guess," exclaimed Joseph. "Black Hawk hasn't enough men left to do any damage now. The war is ended."

"Yes," agreed Mason. "The war is ended. We can now go back to our homes and lead peaceable lives once more. For my part I'm glad of it."

"I'd be, too, if I had a home to go to," remarked Joseph sadly.

"We've had our revenge, though, Joe," exclaimed Robert.

"Yes, we've had that, all right. At least Black Hawk has been punished, though we didn't do so much of it."

"You did your share," said John Mason warmly. "You got one good thing out of the war, too, Joe."

"What was that?" asked Joseph.

"The Swallow."

"I certainly did," exclaimed Joseph warmly. "I think I'll go see if he is all right. I'd hate to have him stolen at this late date."

"We'll all go," said Mason. "The fight is over and we might as well leave. Where's Deerfoot?"

"He here," replied a familiar voice as Deerfoot appeared from behind a large clump of willows. He had an expression of grim satisfaction on his face and at his belt hung three new scalps. The boys could not repress a feeling of disgust as they saw these bloody trophies. They had witnessed a great deal of killing and seen much gore in the past few weeks, but instead of becoming accustomed to it, they were thoroughly sick of it all.

"Where's Black Hawk?" demanded Robert of Deerfoot. "Did you capture or kill him?"

"Black Hawk run away," replied Deerfoot.

"If he is still at large we may have trouble yet," remarked Mason somewhat anxiously. "He is a very smart man and may be able to collect more braves and come back for revenge some time."

"Don't you think he realizes that it is hopeless to resist?" asked Joseph.

"I don't know," said Mason, shaking his head. "I have a feeling that we are always going to have trouble until he is put out of the way. I wish someone would capture him."

CHAPTER XXX

CONCLUSION

JOHN MASON had wished for Black Hawk's capture. His wish was fulfilled and as fortune would have it, he, Deerfoot and both Joseph and Robert were present when the great chief was delivered into the hands of his enemies.

After the battle of Bad Axe the volunteers were mustered out of service and the fighting came to an end. All resistance on the part of the Indians had been broken, and out of a thousand Sacs who had crossed the Mississippi and invaded the settlements in April, only a hundred and fifty now remained. Black Hawk had escaped, but Indians of hostile tribes were put on his trail and at length succeeded in capturing him.

On the twenty-seventh day of August, 1832,

John Mason, Deerfoot, Joseph and Robert were at Prairie du Chien. This was not far from the scene of the last battle and the four friends were still in that vicinity, chiefly because they had no other place to which they might go. At least the two brothers had no home, and Deerfoot would leave them under no conditions. John Mason remained with his young friends, thinking he might still be of service to them, and could offer them advice as to starting life afresh.

They were all talking to the Indian Agent, a man named Street, and were seeking his knowledge of the country in the hope he might be able to help them in the selection of a new home. Suddenly a commotion started outside and everyone rushed to see what the cause of the excitement was. Into the streets of the town marched two Winnebagos, Chaetar and One-eyed Decorah by name. Between them and with head held high, walked Black Hawk.

"Black Hawk is captured!" cried Mason. "There he is now!"

Everyone in the crowd surged forward to obtain a glimpse of the famous redman and Joseph and Robert were in the very first row.

Straight to the office of the Indian Agent the old warrior was led and then Agent Street came forward to meet him.

Black Hawk was indeed an imposing figure. He was clad in a suit of white doeskin. His hair was all plucked out with the exception of the scalp-lock and in that were fastened some eagle's feathers. He was short in stature, as he was only about five feet four or five inches tall. His face was thin, with the high cheek bones characteristic of his race. His mouth was large and when in repose his lips remained slightly parted. He had a prominent nose of what is called the Roman type. His eyes were bright and piercing, but with a thoughtful expression in them. He had no eyebrows and his forehead was high and broad. His head he kept thrown back and his pose gave the impression of dignity and of one accustomed to command.

"He's not very beautiful," whispered Robert. "He looks smart, though."

"He is smart," exclaimed John Mason. "He certainly led us a dance."

"You know I feel sort of sorry for him," said Joseph. "I never had any pity for him when

we were fighting him but he looks sort of pitiful now."

"Not to me," cried Robert. "I can't forget what he did to us."

Speeches were now made by the different men in the assembly. Black Hawk's two captors related how they had captured the prisoner at the Wisconsin River Dells, and Agent Street congratulated them on their good work. Finally Black Hawk's turn came and he arose slowly and proudly from his seat. In a steady and clear voice he faced the crowd and spoke as follows:

"You have taken me prisoner with all my warriors. I am much grieved, for I expected if I did not defeat you, to hold out much longer, and give you more trouble before I surrendered. I tried hard to bring you into ambush, but your last general understands Indian fighting. The first one was not so wise. When I saw I could not beat you by Indian fighting I determined to rush on you, and fight you face to face. I fought hard. But your guns were well aimed. The bullets flew like birds in the air and whizzed by our ears like the wind through the trees in winter. My warriors fell around me; it began

to look dismal. I saw my evil day at hand. The sun rose dim on us in the morning and at night it sank in a dark cloud, and looked like a ball of fire. That was the last sun that shone on Black Hawk. His heart is dead, and no longer beats quick in his bosom. He is now a prisoner of the white men; they will do with him as they wish. But he can stand torture and is not afraid of death. He is no coward. Black Hawk is an Indian.

"He has done nothing for which an Indian ought to be ashamed. He has fought for his countrymen, the squaws and the papooses, against white men, who came year after year to cheat him and take away their lands. You know the cause of our making war. It is known to all white men. They ought to be ashamed of it. The white men despise the Indians, and drive them from their homes. But the Indians are not deceitful. The white men speak bad of the Indian, and look at him spitefully. But the Indian does not tell lies; Indians do not steal.

"An Indian who is as bad as the white men could not live in our nation; he would be put to death and eaten up by the wolves. The white men are bad schoolmasters; they carry false

books. They smile in the face of the poor Indian to cheat him; they shake him by the hand to gain his confidence, to make him drunk, to deceive and ruin him. We told them to let us alone and keep away from us, but they followed on and beset our paths, and they coiled themselves among us like the snake. They poisoned us by their touch. We were not safe. We lived in danger. We were becoming like them, hypocrites and liars, all talkers and no workers.

"We looked up to the Great Spirit. We went to our great father. We were encouraged. His great council gave us fair words and big promises; but we got no satisfaction. Things were growing worse. There were no deer in the forest. The opossum and beaver were fled; the springs were drying up, and our squaws and papooses were without victuals to keep them from starving. We called a great council and built a large fire. The spirit of our fathers arose and spoke to us to avenge our wrongs or die. We all spoke before the council fire. It was warm and pleasant. We set up the war whoop and dug up the tomahawk; our knives were ready and the heart of Black Hawk swelled high in his bosom when he led his warriors to

battle. He is satisfied. He will go to the world of spirits contented. He has done his duty. His father will meet him there and commend him.

"Black Hawk is a true Indian and disdains to cry like a woman. He feels for his wife, his children and friends. But he does not care for himself. He cares for his nation and the Indians. They will suffer. He laments their fate. The white men poison the heart. My countrymen will in a few years become like the white men, so that you cannot trust them, and there must be as in the white settlements, nearly as many officers as men to take care of them and keep them in order.

"Farewell, my nation. Black Hawk tried to save you, and avenge your wrongs. He drank the blood of some of the Whites. He has been taken prisoner and his plans are stopped. He can do no more. He is near his end. His sun is setting and he will rise no more. Farewell to Black Hawk."

He finished speaking and a silence fell upon the crowd gathered to hear him. He had made a profound impression and his hearers were deeply affected.

"I certainly feel sorry for that man," exclaimed Joseph at length.

"So do I," agreed Mason. "He tried to do right as he saw it and now he is broken-hearted and discouraged."

"His spirit is not broken, though," said Robert warmly.

"I should think not," exclaimed Joseph. "It never will be either. As he says himself, 'he is an Indian'."

"He doesn't think much of the white men, does he?" said Robert.

"Not much," agreed John Mason. "I don't blame him, for they have given the Indians a pretty rough treatment as a rule."

"There are bad Indians, just as there are bad white men," said Joseph. "I guess the bad white men are more numerous, though."

"Ugh," grunted Deerfoot.

"Did you agree with that remark?" cried Robert, advancing toward Deerfoot with a threatening air. "You know what will happen to you if you did."

Deerfoot smiled grimly at his young friend's remarks. He was gradually becoming used to the teasing he was constantly subjected to and

he was learning how to take it in good spirits.

"Me no afraid," he exclaimed and almost laughed as he spoke.

"You're improving, Deerfoot. You'll be all right soon," laughed Robert as he slapped his Pottowattomie friend heartily on the back.

"Come on, Bob," urged Joseph. "It's time for us to be leaving. There goes Black Hawk."

The four friends turned to look and saw Black Hawk being led away down the street. Two soldiers walked on each side of him, while with head still held proudly erect the aged warrior marched silently on and thus passed from the sight of John Mason, Deerfoot, Robert and Joseph forever.

THE END

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